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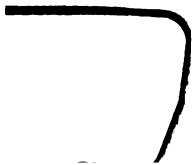
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Brown, John H. 1860

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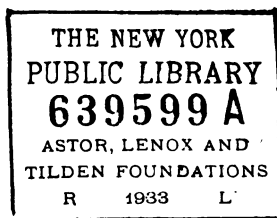
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THE BEYOND

2

No doubt there is a great deal to be said in favour of a large life, with many interests and numerous friends. But this largeness has its drawbacks. To-day, we know our education has given us, as it were, all the kingdoms of the earth. We know a little of everything. We take an intelligent interest in such matters as public health, army organisation, evolution, philology, wireless telegraphy, and a great number of other matters. To-day, too, we have many friends. We know a hundred people to bow to. Were it necessary, we could fill our drawing-room and stairs with five hundred people; and although they are only acquaintances, and many of them not even that, we call them all friends. The fact is, we are mere smatterers, both in knowledge and in heart. We do not know anything thoroughly.

We do not love or hate well. It was very different in the old days, and is very different even now in places remote from the thoroughfare of our times. There even now people love and hate with their whole hearts. Love and hate are to these a matter of life and death. In our great towns it is a matter of passing an hour, or, perhaps, a trip to the Divorce Court.

Caistor House was a great, bleak building standing on a small rising ground, from which it overlooked the salt marshes to where the sea-bank breasted the great glistening sea. There were a few scrubby trees about the house, and these trailed away like cowering things from the winds which blew from the ocean. There was a tangled place within high stone walls which had been a garden. But it had got out of hand, for Thorne, the gardener, was a cripple, and the weeds were too many for him.

It was in Caistor House, in one of the rooms which, with its gaunt windows, looked towards the sea, that Elizabeth Temple was born, and it was in that room that, a few hours after her

birth, her young mother died, not sorry to leave the world, which she had found an untoward place, but sorry to leave the little thing which had rested for an hour upon her weary arm, and whose nestling had consoled her almost for all her long suffering. But she went, and her husband, Mr. Temple, a man who was as sour as his own salt acres, who had treated the young girl he had married with a harshness and austerity which made her crawl from him as the trees did from the rough sea wind, mourned her after a fashion, for he swore more and drank more even than was his wont, and as Thorne, the cripple, and Elenor Cass, the housekeeper, said, "his temper knew no bounds."

What was worse, almost, according to the same authorities, Mr. Temple "didn't take to the child," and it was possibly out of a sense of antagonism to him and his inclement ways that Mrs. Cass's heart and Thorne's heart adopted the little motherless thing, that cried more than most children did, and "no wonder," as they said, "to be left by such a sweet mother, and to have such a brute of a father."

It was at Caistor that Elizabeth Temple passed her desolate childhood and weary youth. There was no one to care for her except, perhaps, Mrs. Cass and Thorne, the gardener, and they liked the child in their uncouth way. Mr. Temple scarcely ever saw the child, and when he did run against her in the house or in the ill-kept grounds he barked curses at her, which frightened the child as she ran away from him. In her childhood she was allowed to run as wild as the garden; and in that wilderness, all the more of a wilderness because there were signs in the weedy walks, the overgrown box border hedges, in the lichen-hairy trees, that care had once been bestowed on it, when the weather was anything like good, she spent most of her time in games of the strangest which she had invented for herself. Mrs. Cass had upon one occasion given her a wooden doll a little scantily clothed, but the colour of its cheeks was so high that it might have been blushing for its defective underclothing. This doll was Elizabeth's constant companion. On it she bestowed much affection, but sometimes she visited her

anger upon it. On one memorable occasion, when the coachman had offended her, she slapped the doll until her fingers ached, and as even then her anger burned she threw it to the ground and broke off one of its wooden legs. But that casualty put an end to her wrath, and she sat down on the ground just where she was, on the road to the stable-yard, and hugged the poor disabled doll and wept over it. She tried to mend the doll unsuccessfully. But after that she was always more tender with the doll than heretofore ; and once when by accident it had been left out of doors in the garden all night, the child prayed for it, and when in bed wept and did not sleep until lowering dawn looked in at the nursery window.

Children can have too many toys. If they have, the result is comparative indifference to all. But one or two, however battered and broken, why, a child's heart is a perfect almshouse for these. So Elizabeth treasured the poor doll, and when its clothes were worn out she carefully wrapt it in a shawl of her own. The doll blushed less now, but probably not on account of the

amplitude of its covering, but because it had been out in all weathers, and its paint had been well-nigh all washed away.

The child was "great friends" with Thorne, for somehow in her thoughts she had come to the conclusion that God had done the same for him that she had done for her doll—been angry, thrown him down and broken him. So she often spoke of him as "Poor Thorne." She conversed much with him when she met him in the garden or in the poor ragged park, and asked him questions which he found it difficult to answer. "How did plants grow?" "What made one seed come up a pea and another a bean?" "Did the flowers like the rain?" "Did the cows talk to one another, and what did they say?" "If you went straight over the sea, where would you come to; was it only sea, and sea?" All these questions made Thorne scratch his head, which was his idea of thinking. But most of her questions went without answer. But perhaps, after all, it is these questions that do us the most good, just as it is the prayers that are not answered that are the best sermons.

The fact is, Elizabeth was a curious mixture—at times she had the spring temper of her dead mother, at other times she was as angry as the east wind, which was the habitual set of her father's rough disposition. Now she would fondle Mrs. Cass's hand in a way which made that good woman feel like a mother to her, anon she would stamp her foot, and sometimes even bite that hand, and, as she had picked up some of her father's growling oaths, she was known on occasions to swear both at the housekeeper and Thorne. It is quite true she was soon contrite again, and the tears in her blue eyes and the trembling lip both asked for pardon in a way which was not to be denied. She loved the dilapidated doll as we have seen, but even its inoffensiveness roused gusts of passion in her, and its punishments were as severe as its caresses were bland and beautiful.

All this to the wise reader seems very foolish, but we think, rightly looked at, it is not foolish at all. The history of all evolution is re-enacted every day in the development of the embryo of every individual, and the history of the develop-

ment of the religion of the race is in miniature told in the life of every human being. It seems at first sight folly to love a doll, or to revenge yourself upon a wooden thing. But the doll is, after all, only the embryo of the God, and it is not the doll loved or the idol worshipped that is the thing to fix your attention on, but on the little girl's heart loving or the stupid savage worshipping, which is worthy of reverent consideration. These vague movements of the heart and brain are like the pushing of the white shoots of a plant in spring which is feeling its way through the brown earth into the presence of the perfect day.

Once, when she was about ten years of age, she was sitting with her doll in its shawl wrapper in her arms on the sea-bank, overlooking the sea, which was bandying light with the sun, when she saw, not far from her, a boy who was two or three years older than herself, who was seated in a boat not far from the shore. Then an idea came into her head that she would like to sail away over the sea. There was no place visible to which she could sail, and that was the fascination which

tempted her. She beckoned to the boy with a commanding gesture, and he lazily came nearer and asked her what she wanted.

"I want you to take me a sail in your boat," she said, and although it was in the form of a request, it sounded like an order. The boy hesitated, and then said—

"Well, come along."

Elizabeth sprang to her feet so hastily that she dropped the doll, but she stooped and picked it up and kissed it and cooed to it as she went down the bank towards the seashore. She scrambled into the boat, wetting her feet in so doing, and sat down in the stern facing the boy, who asked her where he was to row.

"There," she said, and pointed to the horizon. That was her mystery.

The boy bent himself to the oars, and looked now and again at Elizabeth when he thought she was not looking at him. He wondered at her dress, her red lips, and great eyes, and when these were turned on him he blushed and bent more as he pulled at the oars.

"Did you ever go there?" asked Elizabeth, pointing to the horizon.

"Yes," answered the boy.

"And what did you see when you got there?"

"Sea, more sea," he answered.

"Go on," she said imperiously. And he went on. In time they were a good mile from the shore, but the horizon was still before her.

"Go on," she cried; her curiosity was insatiable.

At last, after a long time, when the land had dwindled to an azure hump behind them, the boy rested on his oars, and when she called on him to go on, he said—

"I'm tired."

"Go on," she said again, with an angry flush, and again he bent to the oars, but still the reticent horizon gave nothing to her hungry eyes. She saw nothing but the great round moon of a sea before her and behind her.

"My arms are sore," said the boy. "Let us go back."

Elizabeth was weeping and did not answer, so he went on again. But compunction came

to her in time when she found that the sea was not going to give up its secret, and she said with a sob—

“Yes, we will go back.”

So back they crept over the steel-grey water to the shore.

When they had run the boat on to the shingle below the green sea-bank, and they had leapt out, he held out his hands to her with the palms upwards and said—

“See what you have done.”

The palms were all raw and blistered.

“Oh! I’m sorry,” she said, and the tears came again into her eyes, and she took the hands and kissed them. And his face was as red as the raw palms as she, still hugging her doll, went towards Caistor along the sea-bank.

II

Harry Rofe, the boy who had rowed Miss Temple out in his boat in search of “the beyond,” was the son of Mr. Rofe, who farmed some flat acres behind the sea-bank which had belonged

to Mr. Temple's father, but which had been sold by him to Rofe.

The Caistor property had been at one time large, but the habits of the Temples had been those of the wasting sea and not those of the protecting sea-bank, and Mr. Rofe, who had been a hard-fisted, saving man, had bought the farm, and although he had borrowed from the Welbeck Bank nearly half the money that he gave for it, he still felt that he was on the up-grade of prosperity and that the Temples were going down. The present owner of the Caistor estates always bore a grudge to his father for having sold the Netherbank Farm, for there is no vice we are less willing to forgive in others than those that have us in their grip, and he resented his father's spendthrift ways. But as his father was safe from his curses in the churchyard behind the rusted iron railings of the Caistor burial-place, Mr. Temple used to curse Rofe of Netherbank as if it was he that was to blame. But I am going back too far. Mr. Temple's enmity was in the days of Mr. Rofe's seeming

prosperity, but latterly the farmer's ways had fallen on unpleasant places. A year or two before Elizabeth's trip to the horizon there had come a great storm to the coast. The tides of the ocean and the sky had become allies. It was a spring tide of the highest, and the winds heaped it up higher and higher against the sea-bank, and in the black night the siege of the land succeeded. Great breaches were made in the poor defence, and hundreds of acres behind the bank were covered with water. The poor rabbits in the bank were drowned in thousands, and the damage which was done throughout the whole district was enormous. Even Mr. Temple's own land suffered, but he seemed to forgive the tempest when he heard that Mr. Rofe at the Netherbank had suffered more than any, and that, as Mrs. Cass put it, "ruin stared him in the face."

"Serves him right," said the Squire with a raw chuckle. "What right had he to set up for being a gentleman and buy other people's land?"

Since then Rofe had had a hard struggle to pay the interest to the Welbeck Bank.

Now, it was Rofe's son who had rowed Elizabeth Temple in his boat, as we have seen, and who had blistered and barked his hands in her imperious service. But that had happened when Elizabeth was quite a little lady, and the boy had, as it were, taken the Queen's shilling when she kissed his hands, and had remained her true and loyal servant ever since. He had rowed her in the boat often since then, and he would have liked to have blistered his hands on those occasions as on the first, but Elizabeth's ambition to see over the horizon had been balked in that early excursion. She had learned that there was only another horizon beyond this one, and she was more merciful to the lad, so the occasion for a kiss for a plaster did not occur again.

The lad grew up a tall, strong youth, and Elizabeth, although she grew up too, was made in womanhood's smallest mould, and seemed as fragile as a butterfly. But it was her very littleness and fragility that endeared her to the great, strong youth, who had less time now to row on the sea, as he had to work, and work hard,

for his living on his father's poor, stunted farm. But although no love passages had passed between them since that first day, they met from time to time, and the girl, now almost a woman, admired the man's strength and slow gentleness. She had seen so few men, and just as her heart used to go out towards the poor wooden doll for lack of other avenues, so somehow now it went out towards the lad.

Mr. Temple took very little interest in his daughter or her doings. Her education had come, as her growth had, from Nature. She had learned to read badly from Mrs. Cass. She had learned all that Thorne knew about gardening, which was not much. She had read many books, many of them quite unsuited to her youth and sex, which she found in the tattered library at Caistor. But as the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb, so is education given in Dame Nature's school to those who have no tutors or governesses, and Elizabeth had got some fragments of learning in the scramble of life. All this seemed a matter of absolute indifference to her father, but when

some neighbour whispered to him that he had seen Elizabeth walking on the sea-bank with "that lout Rofe's son," he was no longer indifferent, but on his return home, hot with what he had drunk at the club in Welbeck, hot too with passion, he sent for Elizabeth, and stormed at her, and called her names, many of which were foul enough.

She held her little head up defiantly, and his anger seemed like the sea's surfy rage round a little rock.

"You've disgraced me, you slut," he cried, his face getting redder with his anger. "You've taken up with a low farm-hand whose father's a bankrupt. You a Temple! But I'll be damned if you carry on your games here!"

His anger was perhaps a little damped by the girl's quiet, for she said nothing, so he got up and strode about the room, and muttered and swore.

"What have you got to say?" he cried, as he stopped and faced her. "Is it true? Damn you!"

"Yes, quite true," Elizabeth answered, although she did not know to what she was assenting. All

she knew was that her father was angry with Harry Rofe, and her conscience took his part.

"True!" bellowed the old man. "What do you mean? Do you mean you care for a low farmer's son?"

"Yes, I do," said Elizabeth.

"Do you know he's my enemy, that his father took the land from me, that he is nothing but a lout, a common farm-hand? Do you know all this, you hussy?"

"Yes," said Elizabeth, "I know all that."

There was a pause, then her father ran at her with his hand raised to strike her; there was murder in his eye and in his heart, but before he reached her something happened. He stopped, his face became red-purple, and he staggered and fell to the floor.

Then Elizabeth ran and called Mrs. Cass, and when assistance could be got the Squire was carried to his bed, and they sent for a doctor to Welbeck. The servants whispered that he had struck Miss Elizabeth, and that he had had a stroke.

That night Elizabeth left Caistor House, and sought Harry Rofe in the fields near Netherbank, and when the sun went down and the stars crept out she found him.

"Do you care for me?" she asked.

"God knows I do," said the lad.

"And what would you do if I loved you?" she asked again. It was a strange courtship.

"Anything," answered the lad, with the fine confidence of a full heart.

"Would you row me away and away as you did once, a long time ago, away out to sea?" she asked.

He swore he would.

"I do care for you," she said simply.

"Then come," said her lover.

Never was a stranger wooing than that.

They went together down to the sea-bank, to the shingle where the old boat lay, and they got into the crazy craft, and he rowed out to sea.

They could see the lights in Caistor House as they went, and Elizabeth knew the light which shone from the window of her father's room, and

she remembered all the words he had said to her, and with a shudder she cried as in the old days—

“Go on.”

And he went on until the lights which were above them were blotted out by thick clouds, and until the waves had little angry knuckles of foam on them.

At last she spoke.

“Are your hands blistered?”

And Rofe, lying, said “Yes.”

And she crept up to him in the boat and kissed his hand and said—

“Row on.”

She seemed less desirous of seeing what the horizon hid now than of hiding Caistor and all it contained by the horizon which was rising up behind them in the glistening darkness.

“Do you remember,” she asked as she lay in the bottom of the boat, “how you rowed me out long, long ago?”

“Yes,” he answered, and his rough voice had the coo of a dove in it.

“I wanted to see what was out there then.”

"Yes."

"And we never came to it; and you got tired and wanted to go back. Do you want to go back now?"

"No; God forbid!" he said.

"And your hands are not sore?"

"No," he answered, and he bent to the oars again, although the sky had an ugly look, and the stars had withdrawn their eyes, and the wind from the shore delved in the sea.

There was a time when nothing could be heard but the rising storm and the creak of the oars.

Then she whispered—

"Do you care if you never go back?"

"No," he answered.

"The storm is coming," she said; "will we be drowned?"

"Yes," he answered; "I think we will never go back."

He was right. Minutes at such times make mountains of difference. The storm swept down upon the sea and it raged furiously. She could scarcely make him hear when she said—

"Do you mind dying with me here?"

"No," he answered, "but you'll kiss my hand again."

But she did more. She reached her face to his and kissed his mouth.

"No," he said, "I can die now."

"And I will see what is out there beyond the horizon," she said.

And the storm raged.

That night the Squire died in Caistor House.

A COWARD OF CONSCIENCE

No man is altogether sordid, but he was as near it as men are made. He lived in the village of Hightae, a petty place consisting of a dozen or twenty houses, and yet it was the nucleus of a town. He worked as a carpenter and wheelwright, and his common life seemed to be like that of other humdrum villagers, who are born, work, eat, and die. Perhaps it is well when they are content with that career; it is like the career of a mole, which works and burrows in the dark all its poor days. But this man Aitken, who had married for such love as the clodhopper feels, and had a child, had a greedy heart, and that made him ambitious of greater riches than his craft could bring him. It was these thoughts that put it into his head to become the friend of old Nicholson of the Castlehill Farm, a man

who lived alone, and who was said to be wealthy. Aitken laid himself out in his uncouth way to please the old man, telling his wife that as the old man had no kith or kin, he might as well, when he died, leave his money to them; and the woman approved this high diplomacy, and even sent to the Castlehill Farm such small gifts as their poor household could afford—some scones when she baked, some pork when the pig was killed, and the first of their new potatoes, for the carpenter had a patch of garden ground. It was not a very fine thing to do, to attempt to worm himself into the favour of an old, friendless man in order that he might inherit his money; but if we are to judge men by their neighbours, there was nothing so very bad about it. But when one begins to walk downhill the descent soon becomes too easy. Aitken was often up at the Castlehill Farm, a pleasant enough place on the green ridge between two lakes, which rippled in a margin of whispering sedge. The old man was solitary, and Aitken was some one to talk to. When a man is very much alive he is news enough for

himself. Do you think lovers read newspapers? But when one's interest in affairs palls, news and gossip is the stopgap of time. And so old Nicholson found Aitken's conversation—which was to some extent the aftermath of the "*Standard*," a bi-weekly which found its way to Hightae—agreeable. The rest of the villagers soon saw the meaning of the intimacy. When we have the will to be guilty of a deed ourselves, it is wonderful how soon we find out the mean motives of another. But the small public opinion of the village did not affect Aitken. He knew it was a difficult world to be in; he knew that carpentry was an uphill trade in a small village, and that when a man dies he cannot take his stocks and shares with him, and reasoning thus, he saw nothing wrong in his conduct, and indeed tried to put the colour of kindness on it by saying how dull the old man was at the Castlehill Farm, and also had to put another complexion on his act by saying that Nicholson had seen and done much in his day, and that his conversation was "real interesting."

It is curious to note how easy it is to put the watch-dog suspicion to sleep. Mr. Nicholson, like all men of means, looked with dubious eye at all those who approached him. He suspected every one, and thought that that was the only safe attitude. But soon he became confident in the presence of Aitken—talked about his investments in this or that stock in a way which made Aitken bubble with interest, and at last led to the sorry end of the whole squalid friendship.

Life is often by the vulgar divided into two parts—the first a strenuous effort to get, and the second a strenuous effort to keep. Mr. Nicholson was in the latter phase, and he watched events as if they were on the prowl to rob him. It was about this time that, owing to a depression in trade, the receipts upon a certain railway fell off deplorably. The dividend was threatened, and Mr. Nicholson, on the alert, sold his stock, amounting to £1000, and not having confidence in any other investment, had the money sent to him at the Castlehill Farm. Now although he could not trust the great railway company, he confided in

Aitken, and told him that he had the money in the house, had indeed locked it up in the old desk which stood in his sitting-room, and chuckled that it was "safer there than in the Caledonian Stock."

It was this that was the spark that set fire to Aitken's criminal propensity. As he walked back that night from the farm to the village, he thought how easy it would be to break open the rickety old desk and take the money. One thousand pounds! Then began the court of law arguments in favour of doing this thing. The old man would never miss it. He was getting no interest from it, it was no good to him. It would only remain in the old desk until he died. He might even be robbed (that was a curious argument of a would-be thief). Then a thousand pounds! What would it not do? It would make a lady of his wife, a gentleman of Jamie—that was his son, a little lad of eight—and he himself need never more do "a hand's turn." And between all this and him there only stood a crazy lock. His palm itched. The next day, as he planed

and hammered, the thought of the money clanged in his head, and he went to the Castlehill Farm in the gloaming of the following day. He had only formed half a plan. He would find some excuse to get Mr. Nicholson to leave the sitting-room, and then when he was gone, he had a strong chisel in his coat pocket—that was all his plan. And after some conversation, and even some small hospitality—for Nicholson produced a black bottle and a water-jug, as he usually did, and Aitken had helped himself—the opportunity came, without his having to make it for himself. Mr. Nicholson left the room, and Aitken sprang to the desk. It resisted his hand, and he inserted the chisel. The lock yielded, and he was clutching at papers to find the gold or notes when the old man returned. The miser gave a long cry and rushed in his feebleness upon Aitken, calling out, "Thief, thief." He had no weapon but his old feeble fingers, but with them he laid hold of the man who was robbing him, and clutched convulsively at his throat. Aitken had to shake him off, but the old man clung to him,

calling out all the time. Then the chisel "came handy," and Aitken picked it up from where it lay and struck a blow at the old man, and the fingers relaxed and he fell moaning to the floor. The first thought of the thief was his booty. He had not yet found the money, although he had forced all the drawers—all except the one with the secret spring. He opened that, and there the money lay hid. As he clutched it he felt a feeble hand lay hold of his foot. The old man even in dying thought to prevent this theft. The touch made Aitken shudder, but he was in a hurry now. The old man was alive, that was shown by the clutch. He had seen it all. Then the prudent counsel came into his head, "Dead men tell no tales." And with a swift stroke of the chisel at the old man's heart he thought he made one avenue of escape safe. But he was terrified when the old man, half raising himself on his elbow, called out "Thief" in a voice gurgling with blood, and then fell back on the floor. With cunning Aitken concealed the chisel in his pocket, and ran like a hunted thing from the

house. He made his way through the dark to the village, with thoughts running in his head. "What was he to do now." The old man was dead, murdered, robbed. He, Aitken, would "swing for it." Of course, he would be suspected. Doctors, curse them, would say the wound was made with a carpenter's chisel. He wished the old man had never had the money, or never told him about it. It was his own fault! And then that last action, when the old man sat up and called him "Thief," and fell back dead, came back on him, and he quickened his pace until he almost ran. He saw the gleam of the lake to his right hand, and he thought that it would be wise to throw away the chisel; but no! he would keep it. They might come to take him. Take him? No, they should not do that. He made up his mind to leave Hightae. There were more places in the world than that village. So he hurried home, and scared his wife with his white face. Then he was angry because she asked him what had gone wrong, and how old Mr. Nicholson was. Then he ordered her to get

Jamie out of his bed and put on his clothes, for Aitken had formed the insane intention of taking the boy with him in his flight. He had a warm corner in his heart, black and cold as it was, for the boy. And it is our excellences which betray us when we are prospering in guilt. While the boy was being dressed, rubbing the sleep out of tired eyes with resolute knuckles, his wife's eye fell again on her husband's white face and then on his hand.

"Why, there's blood upon it," she said, pointing with accusing finger.

But Aitken, although he winced, only swore at her, and told her to be quick. And soon the poor child, still knuckling sleep out of his eyes, was ready, and Aitken took him by the hand and made for the door.

"Where are you going, David?" cried his wife.

But he would not answer, and he and the child went out into the night. Jamie was weeping at being taken out of a warm bed at night and taken away from his mother, but at the same time he wept quietly, for he felt that there was something

"by ordinar" in the air, and he ran on beside his father, who was walking toward the north with long strides. He seemed to feel that there was something ominous behind him, hence his haste. Some men when they desire to hide take to the crowded town, others to the desolate country.

Aitken was making for the bare, hilly country—the country of the innocent sheep, which lies to the north of his native valley. He had no definite idea of escape, but he was urged on by something behind—that scene in the farm, and by the main-spring of many hearts, fear. When they had gone some miles Jamie began to cry, and when asked what was the matter with him, he complained that he was tired. Then Aitken lifted him in his arms and carried him against his breast. The pressure of the child upon the chisel, which was in his breast pocket, pressed it into his flesh, and the hurt was like a hurt of conscience. After walking some miles he sat down by the roadside to rest, and Jamie fell asleep in his arms. He may have sat there half-an-hour tenderly holding the child, when Jamie wakened in a terror, calling out, "Oh!

mother, mother!" and with little frightened fingers holding with relaxing and tightening grip at his father's coat. The terror, as if it were infectious, frightened the man, and he trembled almost as much as the child, and then some tears flowed from his eyes, he did not know why, and fell on the boy's face, and in these Aitken saw the stars glitter.

But the sense of being hunted was still upon him, and when the child had recovered from his terror he asked him "if he could walk a bit."

And Jamie, still thinking of his mother, said, "Where are we going, faither?"

But that was a difficult question to answer, and Aitken gave none, and they trudged on in the night, under all the worlds looking on, in silence. It was just before the day broke that they saw a light in the valley below them. It was shining from some house in the little town of Moffat, still a mile away. But the ray touched him. It seemed to shine on the little parlour at the Castle-hill Farm. He saw the desk gaping, and the old man trying to rise, calling out "Thief," and falling back dead. He shivered, although it was not

really cold, and then kindly fondled the child's hand, which lay in his, as he helped it along the weary way. When one is feeling deeply, to think often seems irksome. One will not address oneself to it. Action is enough. Running away was all his thought. The "whither" had not been considered. He had the animal cunning which avoids the haunts of men, and when the sun rose away down Annandale, and not only rose gloriously in heaven, but fell all gold upon the firth and its wet sands, he was on the high rough hills which lie to the east of Moffat. It was the child's voice which brought him to bay with thought.

"Faither," cried Jamie whimpering—"faither, I'm hungry."

Aitken had not felt hunger or thirst. Now he had to do something for the child, and finding a "buildy bit" for Jamie, he told him to wait there in the wood until he came back, and he left him in search of some cottage where he could beg or buy food. When he had gone a few yards he returned and took the notes he had stolen from his pocket, and with them the chisel with which

34 A COWARD OF CONSCIENCE

the unsightly deed had been done. Some of the notes stuck to the steel. But he tore them away and thrust all the notes into Jamie's pocket, and put back the chisel into his own, and then, getting up from the ground, he went away again, while the child whimpered, "Faither, I'm hungry."

The country was a desolate one, over which the sheep nibbled and the grouse crowed, but there were no human habitations to be found. He saw the smoke from Moffat as it lay in its little caldron of hills going up into the morning light, but he did not like to go near a house. Should he wait until the darkness fell? But the child's plaintive cry was in his ears, and he went boldly, sometimes touching the handle of the chisel to give him courage, but it often failed, for it was a weapon which had a fearful memory sticking to it—sticking as the notes had stuck. He was on the outskirts now, and was soon in a baker's shop and had bought the bread he wanted. He was impatient while they made it into a bundle for him, and often looked behind him, and when at length he had it he started from the village at a run. Every eye hurt him.

Then for the first time a strange thought came into his head. Why had he brought Jamie with him? He was only a burden to him. But he put the thought away, and remembered the little hand which had been warm in his as they journeyed along in the night, when his own hand made a cosy nook for it. His hand. Then he remembered his wife had seen blood upon it. But still he put that little glimmer of goodness against all his crimes, and the thought of that gave him courage to live, and he ran on, out of breath, until he heard footsteps behind him. They, too, were hurried footsteps on the hard road, but he dared not look back. He knew without looking that it was a policeman, and that he was following him. The people at the baker's shop must have suspected him, and have given the information. He ran on. He could not go back to Jamie now, he thought, for the notes would be found on the child, and yet the little weary voice crying "I'm hungry," haunted him. So instead of going to the sheltered wood, through which the sun's rays were travelling over the hyacinths, to where Jamie had

fallen asleep, he took the rough hill path, up and up, with his pursuer toiling behind him.

The blood was coursing through him now, and thought was active. He began to see only too clearly how the crime could be proved against him. How useless it had all been. He had thought to make his wife a lady and Jamie a gentleman, and now they would be what? All the money would be taken away from them. And he himself, there was no chance for him. He thought wildly of getting away from his pursuer, and then again he saw the uselessness of that. He wished he had taken the road to the wood, for Jamie was hungry and he was waiting for bread. He put his hand in his pocket and felt the chisel, and thought of killing himself with that, but he remembered whose blood was on the blade and hefted, and hesitated. Just then a path was opened to him. In his haste he had come to the edge of a quarry, which had been cut deep into the hill. A great pit yawned below him. For an instant he thought it was the pit of hell, but the sun's rays were in it, and in the bottom, where these could

not penetrate, there lay a blue lake of shadow. He stood there and looked back. There below him on the ascent was the policeman, and others with him. They were still some distance from him, he had run so fast. Some one called out to him to stop. But he gave no heed to the cry. He tore the chisel out of his pocket, and threw it into the great grave below him, and strained his ear to hear it strike on the stones at the bottom. He would not die with *that* on him. He then knelt down—was it only habit?—and as he had done when he was a little child at his mother's knee he put his palms together, and he tried to remember a prayer, but his blood was running too quick for memory, and at last he cried out—

“God, have mercy.”

He stood up. He was seen by those who were toiling up the hill, and then he disappeared. I would rather not look down.

Later in the day Jamie was found in the wood weeping, and saying, when his sobs would let him, “Faither, I’m hungry.”

PEPYS

OF course this was not the great Pepys of the diary, no, nor the great Pepys of the woolsack, but quite a small Pepys, who lived in rather obscure chambers in the Temple, and was himself obscure. It is these men and their dim lives that invite my respectful curiosity. There is a scramble to write the biography of all the commonplace doings and sayings of a Lord Chancellor or an Archbishop, of a man who has, as the phrase goes, made a name in literature or in science. Nothing that these great men do seems unimportant to the obsequious pens of their ready biographers. If they go to the seaside, it is a matter worthy of record. The smallest joke, which we would forgive a friend, is in their case put on record for the contempt of history. But the obscure persons who live and die in out-of-

the-way corners of time, it is these I have a pity for, and it is the biographer of the mean and unknown that I would aspire to be, if I aspired to be a biographer at all.

The worst, however, of choosing to make violets illustrious is the fact that their modesty is hidden under leaves ; and when one wants to write the life of such a man as Samuel Pepys, the difficulty is that he has left no indelible trace in history ; that the memories of his friends, even if he had any, have not been impressed, or have lost their feeble impressions, and that he has left no works with tongues to speak for him. If you think of it, a great many people's record could be summed up on an ordinary and veracious tombstone. That a man has been born, that he died, are the only two remarkable events in his life. And these, as I say, a tombstone can record for a time, until its foundations give way and it lurches over like a drunk man, or until the lichens and mosses cover with their pall this poor history, and make the man doubly dead to the world.

But in the case of our Samuel even the first of

these events is hidden from us so far as its date is concerned. Indeed, I only knew him when he had become a barrister-at-law, and was living in chambers at 9 Elm Court over the wig-maker's shop, and I have to admit at once that his life was so even and commonplace, that there is next to nothing to record about him. But it is on that account that I am tempted to write about him. A man who lives in great events, who is storming cities, leading forlorn hopes, standing on the deck of his sinking ship and playing the melodrama of life in these heroic ways—he has no need of a penman to wait on his life and to trace its great features. These men are the darlings of fame. Their names are on every lip, and the patient air gets weary of their praise. But Pepys, who had begun his life by aiming at the highest—who had dreamed of being Lord Chancellor, or a judge at least—had really attained nothing, and the pathetic thing about him was the way he went on hoping for success long after the sentence "No hope" had been pronounced against him by Fate. He had come up to London from the country upon the strength of a reputation which

he had achieved in a small provincial town, where he had distinguished himself at school, and was thought a great deal of by two aunts. At that time, long before I knew him, he was young, and youth is the soil upon which hopes grow with the misleading exuberance of a tropical forest. It was in these days that he aspired to the highest, but the years pruned his hopes, and he hauled down the flag of his ambitions until it was half-mast high, which marked the death of hope. I know of nothing sadder in life than the wasting away of spirit, the magnificence of a glorious dawn turning into a dark and drizzling midday, to be followed anon by night itself. He soon found that his ambitions had been audacious. He had his name upon a door in the Temple, and he lived in the two little rooms behind that door. He waited and waited, but no work came his way. At first he felt that he was capable of doing the work as well as any of the bold and confident gentlemen whom he saw in Court. He often saw them go wrong in their law, and cover their defects by their commanding personalities. He saw the men and their kite-like

reputations, reputations of which, like the boy, they only held the string, and the wind of chance puffing did the rest. But his opportunity, which he was waiting for, never came, and he ate his heart out pining for it. He had not, of a truth, much else to eat, for the man had a conscience. He knew that his two good aunts were scrimping and pinching at home that he might have his great chances here in London. They, good souls, never lost their confidence in him. They still were convinced that he would "do great things." They knew that the prizes of the profession were very great—Austin, it was said, had made £40,000 in one year—and consequently you could not expect them to be easily won. It was always a slow process "getting your foot in" at first. But he would win in the end, they were convinced, and they recalled some curious instances of his intelligence as a boy, which are too small to be quoted, but they were the pictures on the leaves of their heart-book. It was with considerations such as these that they consoled themselves, and they ate quite stale bread, saying, untruthfully, that they preferred it, and learnedly,

that it was more wholesome, all to save for Samuel. They did with fires which had the greatest difficulty in keeping the spark of life in them, for they were always on the point of dying from inanition for want of coal. But coals were dear and Samuel must "keep up an appearance." This was all perhaps squalid, but, rightly looked at, was beautiful too. But although they tried to deceive their nephew as to their affluence, he was not deceived. He had a conscience too, and he starved himself behind "his oak," living on bread and butter, an occasional egg, some weak tea, and other forms of "make-believe" diet, and all that he might take as little as possible from his aunts. I think there was something haggardly pathetic about this deep of hunger crying to the other deep of hunger, and yet not in complaining words, but always cheerfully, as if the future was all rosy and the present the "fat of the land."

The years went on like this, and still his chance never came. His foot had never found its way on to the first rung of the ladder which leads to high places. But still he waited and read his

law reports. He began now to doubt his own ability to do work if it came to him. The years had sapped his confidence. All this waiting and starving had made him timid, and, while he waited, he almost feared to hear the knock that never came. When one looks at such a biography one comes to the sad conclusion that many lives are a very sorry fiasco. Here was a man with a good head, a good heart—as his conduct to his aunts showed—with courage and endurance which could face blank days and scanty meals, who is wasted to the world. Surely he was sent here to be of some use; and there he is, peering out through very dirty window panes, which only stare at other dingy brick houses in the court; and the dim daylight peering in on him finds him nourishing his mind by the assiduous perusal of law reports which are never to be of any use to him, during the day; and at night, when his “oak is sported,” and he is shut in with himself, allowing himself as a relaxation a pleasant excursion into literature of a higher sort. He had a small ten-penny copy of Milton, and he read that often.

His books, indeed, were all cheap, but all good. And this was all he did with his life? Not all, perhaps, for if the light could have peered in one night it might have seen tears upon his parchment cheek, and strange they were tears, because the hard pinch of poverty had passed away. He had come into his kingdom. That day he had returned from the country, where he had attended a double funeral. Both his aunts were dead. They died within three days of one another, and their little pittances had come to him. They died in the faith—that is, still believing in their nephew, still convinced that he would do great things some day. And now that he had inherited the little they had left he sat and wept, because the good women had gone away, and he no longer could do them any kindness by starving himself. He had perhaps become, in his solitariness, a little morbid, for he was reproaching himself for not having done enough to save their slender pockets in the past, and his touched conscience reminded him of certain small indulgences he had allowed himself, and reproached him with these

as a cruel conscience will when it is all too late.

But I end as I began, by saying that it is impossible to write the life of such a man—a man who is “in the world and yet not of it,” who does nothing that is worth mentioning, who is not even a sightseer at the events of time, who leaves no record upon paper, but who waits and waits for work which never comes, and whose heart “only remembers.”

PLAYING AT LOVE

THEIR first meeting was amongst the high peas in the garden—not the sweet peas, but the green peas, which were flourishing high in the air and quite hiding the sticks that supported them. The topmost blossoms had not yet turned to pea-pods as the lower ones had, and these seemed like white butterflies tiptoe to take flight. Harry was only a boy, and Jean was only a little girl. But there they met in the long and tangled alley in the quaint old garden which was close to the manor farmhouse. Here without introduction they were friends, and played at “keeping house.” Was not the hedge of peas their sumptuous larder? And when they tired of that they walked hand in hand along the green grass path which ran by the sweetbrier hedge, and called each other sweethearts. This was only parrot-speaking, but it left a memory.

It was a year after that that they met again, and this time in that rollicking holiday place the hay-field. As yet, only half of the hay had been cut, and where it still waved and glistened under the summer's invisible feet it was quite tall, and gave them a shelter from eyes, a dear privacy, almost equal to the gadding foliage of the friendly peas. Here for a time they lay in flowers and grasses, and recalled their last meeting and the walk and the talk by the sweetbrier hedge. And whenever such luxury palled upon them they went and tumbled in the fragrant bundles of hay. And the day was all too short for their frolics. They vowed themselves little lovers still at parting.

It was some years ere they met again, and then there was a shyness between them. They were both thinking of the make-believe of love at which they had played in the old days. She was almost a woman now, and Harry thought himself a man. At his request she met him in the lane near the farm in the evening, and there, as the sun went down, all red through the hedge, and the stars

came out all white above their heads, they spoke of love again. But it was not playing at love now, else why should his heart have pummelled his side, or why should her cheek have been as rosy as the sunset? There is a tremendous difference between fun and earnest in love.

They met often during that summer and autumn. There never had been such a summer, it seemed. All the days were fine, and all the evenings were good for loitering, and there is nothing in life better than loitering under such circumstances. They "plighted their troth," as the old phrase has it, and when they had to part, although that was sad, the load was lightened by the prospect of meeting again.

Harry's lot was cast in London town; and although he looked at the faces there, he saw none to compare with Jean. And all the while he was counting the days until he could be near the Manor Farm again. But disquieting news came to him from the country: Jean was being courted, so the gossip said, by Squire Alden's son, a ne'er-do-well; and that sort of courting, said his

gossip, could do her no good. She was a pretty wench, but light-headed, she feared. She had once thought Harry himself a "little sweet in that quarter; but he must have seen many prettier girls in London than Jean." And thus the letter put the poor lad in purgatory.

But he could do nothing! Was it true? Jean's letters had been shorter of late, and less frequent, too. Was this the ugly reason? He longed for another letter from his aunt, and yet feared its coming. His heart made him a coward. But it came, and it was full of news.

"You remember little Jean, the daughter of the farmer at the Manor Farm; she was a playmate of yours long ago. Well, she has broken her father's and mother's hearts. A heartless hussy. But it is pride and vanity that is the ruin of us all. Well, it's not a week since she ran away with Squire Alden's son, who is, by all accounts, a bad lot, and left a letter for her poor mother, saying that Mr. Alden meant to marry her and make a lady of her. A fine story, indeed. He may have said it, no doubt, but she was a fool

to believe him, if she did. Marry her, the slut."

Ah, these words hurt a sore heart, which was all for defending Jean and all for murdering Mr. Alden.

He sat down in his little lodging—how bare and melancholy and miserable it all looked now—and put his head in his hands, and—he was only a growing-up boy—he wept, as he thought, like a woman.

II

Harry Vane, like a hundred others, tried the anodyne of work. His assiduity pleased his somewhat exacting employers. He was always at work, allowed himself few pleasures—indeed, he thought that what others called pleasures would not be pleasures to him. Once in a way, however, he was persuaded to go to a theatre with a companion. The play went too much home. It dealt with the old, old problem of honest and dishonest love. But the moral was that the wicked lover was, for all his machinations, un-

successful, while the honest lover was happy in the end. His criticism on the play to his friend was, "That it wasn't true to life."

"But isn't it well acted?"

"Yes," he said, "perhaps"; and they began their walk home together.

When they were passing up the Haymarket he heard a girl, who was walking in front of him, laugh. He knew the sound, and an instant after the girl turned round and faced him, called him "Duck," and then there was recognition, and he cried, "Jean!"

And she answered, "What, Harry?"

This was a strange meeting in the Haymarket of the two old lovers of the hay-field at the Manor Farm. Had he done what the good men in story-books do, he would have left her there and then. But no. He was foolish enough still to love this woman, and he went with her, leaving his friend, stood her "the drink" she craved for, and heard her story. The common one.

"He promised to marry me, Harry, and—and

I thought it would be a great thing some day to be the Squire's lady, and live at Hall Place. And you—well, you were a dear old boy, but you were in London, and I thought you would not mind. Did you? And then he tired of me, the brute, and—left me.”

“Don't let us talk of it any more, Jean.”

“And since then,” she continued, “I couldn't go home—and I had to live. And it was all his fault. I wish I had never seen him, Harry.”

“We won't talk of that either,” said Harry Vane. He noted the rouge on her cheek and other things.

Then, as he walked home with her, and gave her money, which she took without much hesitation, he besought her, for his sake, to keep away from—the Haymarket. That was the way he put it, and she understood and promised. And she kept her promise, so far as he knew.

“Charity suffereth long and is kind,” I think, must have meant, Love suffereth long. This lad, Harry Vane, who was a hard-working youth, a stickler for virtue, forgave the girl all her past ;

forgave her the paltry ambition which had tempted her to become Alden's mistress ; forgave her the life she had been leading on the streets, and found for her lax virtue the excuse of poverty. He forgave her all, and all because he loved her. And in a fine frenzy of madness he married her, and talked of the old courtings between the rows of peas and in the sunny hay-field. And he was happy ; yes, happy for a little while.

She was not all he had thought her. She disappointed him in many ways. But who can live up to a high ideal ? She found the days, while he was away at his work in the City, long and wearisome. That was a compliment, and he kissed her for it. But she even found the evenings at home—their little home which was the place he loved best on earth—she found these dull too. She had been used to "the Halls." "There was no harm in them," she said. "Books ! oh, books are dull ; she liked to see things going on."

He was in love, so he humoured her, and he took her out to the theatres and the music-halls. But when she went, she would speak to some

of the men she saw at the halls; she said she had known them before, but, although he loved her, he knew she did not always speak the truth. And these considerations made him angry, made him ashamed.

He found her once, when he had left her for a few minutes, on his return talking to, laughing and drinking wine with one of these men, an ugly man, with an animal leer in his eye. And when he spoke to her and asked her to come away, she turned her back on him. He had to wait for her, and when at length she consented to go home, she had had more wine than was good for her. His thoughts were now not only shame of her, but disgust of himself. Why—the question fluttered about his head—why had he picked her out of the gutter to smudge his own life? He had been a fool. It was hard that his love had blinded him and made him make this great mistake.

When she was herself again he argued with her, but she only laughed at him.

“Was it such an awful thing to be squiffy?”

And as for the *man*, "he was quite as much a gentleman as Harry."

So he went away to his business with a sore heart.

One day he was in the West End on some business matter, and he passed his wife, and she was walking with the same leering person who was "as good a gentleman as he was."

He quarrelled with his wife that night, and she left the room, and soon after he heard the front door slam, and he guessed that it was all over.

He felt, as inconsistent men will, a great revulsion of feeling in favour of her. He had, he accused himself, been harsh to her, perhaps. She had got to like the racket of life, and he was too humdrum for her. He went to his table and took out his pistol; it was a poor toy instrument, but it would do. He loaded it, and then sat down and wrote a letter to his "dear wife," and took all the blame on himself, and he laid it on the table for her, and then blew out his brains. But she never returned, and so she never had his letter.

QUITE A SIMPLE STORY

THERE are those who desire to see and believe in ideal virtue—that is, I take it, virtue which is unmixed with any vice. It would, no doubt, be best to have men act from the highest motives, to have your gold without alloy, but it is necessary for us, in this world, to recognise the fact that such perfection does not exist. We must be content with the second best, for all our virtues go hand in hand with our vices, and self-sacrifice is only the reverse of the coin of selfishness, and our best days of virtue are made out of sullen glooms and bright gleams. This is really not paltering with vice, but attempting to find virtue, where those who are ruled by counsels of perfection would not look for it. It may be well to demand the highest, but, as a matter of decent

toleration, we must learn to be satisfied with an approach in that direction.

All kinds of things and weather
Must be taken in together
To make up a year and a sphere.

This is quite a simple story about quite common people who lived in Crane Court. Crane Court was a deep well in the middle of high houses, into which the sun seldom looked. But even in Crane Court they could sometimes see the stars. In this noisome slum there lived with many others a man named Craig, a dock-worker. He was married, and his wife had two children, one a little boy of four, and another an infant about a year and a half old. Unlike most people in Crane Court, the couple had a reputation. They were spoken of as "hard-working folk." Their neighbours were certainly only casual workers. There was Gerridge, who lived to drink and not to work, and when he did work, it was only as a means to a debauch. He was not in the habit of speaking much when he was sober, but if he had, he would probably, like another illustrious

inebriate, have said, "Please God, I will be drunk upon Saturday"—and he was. He had a daughter that he almost starved. Then there was a couple that got their living "somehow." They said, if they were asked, that they did "odd jobs," but most of the neighbours knew that the "odd jobs" were in the nature of thefts. Still the society of Crane Court, when it met in conclave on a breathless summer night, did not shun this couple. Nor indeed did they "blackball" Mary Blake, who lived in one of the rooms at the top of one of the stairs, which formed the river-bed for the cataract of humanity which foamed down into the pool of the court. And yet Mary Blake was known by every one in the court to be "visited by gentlemen." That was their way of putting it, for even the poor know how to draw veils over the vices of such waifs as live in and visit in Crane Court. There were many others in and around the court, but from these that have been mentioned it will not be difficult to understand the nature and quality of the inhabitants of that muddy eddy off Ratcliffe Highway. But amongst

the unfaithful, Craig and his wife were regarded as, at any rate, exceptions. As I have said, Craig worked regularly. Mrs. Craig kept a clean house—it only consisted of two rooms—and her neighbours said they had only once seen her the worse for drink. The complaint of the society of Crane Court was that the Craigs “gave themselves airs,” that they were too “high and mighty” for the court, which only meant that they to some extent held themselves aloof from their neighbours. Now that is an offence to those from whom you hold yourself aloof which it is difficult to forgive. But the allegation was not altogether true; for Craig sometimes of an evening joined some other dock-workers in a friendly glass at the public, which still bore the name of the Marquis of Granby, and Mrs. Craig, when her husband was out, would sometimes stand at the door which led from their stair into the court and gossip with avidity and affability.

It was upon a hot summer evening, when in the country midges would have possession of all the golden air, but in Crane Court and “the Highway” nothing but frouzy heat and

smelling dust was to be met with, that Craig had gone to spend an hour over a tankard at the public mentioned, and that Mrs. Craig, having "tidied up the house a bit, and made all as neat as a new pin," came down to get a breath of air, as she called it, in the court. The common people, you may have noticed, like to lean—a hoarding, a fence, or a doorpost is, as it were, their habitat. And Mrs. Craig was resting her back—it had a pain in it, for it had bent over the stubborn sweeping of the floors upstairs—on the doorpost, and was in interesting conversation with Mrs. Nash and Mrs. Sludge, who lived at No. 2.

As I say, she had left all neat and clean upstairs. The baby was in its high chair by the table, and Johnny—that was the boy of four—was in charge. He himself was cutting out figures from some illustrations in a page of an old newspaper, a fascinating pastime for the young, for it combines a pretence of usefulness with a maximum of destruction. The baby was cooing with the vacant content which is suitable

to a débutante of life, and Johnny had just, by an inadvertent snip of the scissors, deprived one of our leading statesmen of his head.

But no less momentous doings were on foot downstairs. Mrs. Nash and Mrs. Sludge were discussing Mary Blake and a recent scandal where one of the gentlemen who had visited Mary Blake had declared in the court that he had been robbed. Mrs. Craig was human, and the story, squalid as it was, interested her. Besides, there was a "breath more air down there" than up in the room where the baby was cooing still and clutching at some of Johnny's "press cuttings."

In one of the clutchings which missed its mark—for Johnny had prudently kept all his statesmen and generals (he liked generals, although their horses' legs were very hard to cut out, and were often lamed for life when they left his scissors)—the child managed to get hold of a wrinkle in the table-cloth. That seemed to its disappointment better than nothing at all, and it kept hold. It may—you never can tell how

early reason begins—even have had an idea that by drawing the table-cloth towards it it would bring some of Johnny's paper treasures within reach. As a fact, it kept hold and pulled with all its little might. It pulled too well, for the lamp which was on the table, and which had been lighted before Mrs. Craig had gone to "her club," swayed and fell over, and soon there was a tongue of flame, which had laid hold of the table-cloth itself. Johnny ran screaming down the stairs to his mother, and, having reached the "foot" of the stairs, seeing two other women with his mother, he pulled at her gown, saying—

"Mother, mother, baby's pulled the table-cloth——"

But at the instant Mrs. Nash was at the most interesting part of the dubious scandal, and Mrs. Craig told Johnny to hold his tongue.

He did for a little while say nothing, and even seemed to be listening to what Mrs. Sludge was saying in her wheezy voice. But then he thought him of his duty, and piped out—

"Mother, the table's on fire."

Even then for an instant the words did not attract Mrs. Craig's attention. Her thoughts were not at the instant upstairs with the baby, but with the strange story of Mary Blake.

But Johnny saw that something must be done, and, as the truth would not do, he tried what he thought at the instant was a lie.

"Mother," he called out, "the house is on fire."

Then they paid attention to him at last. Mrs. Craig ran up the stairs, followed stertorously by Mrs. Sludge and Mrs. Nash; and three or four others, hearing the boy's cry, ran up with them.

He had spoken truth by mistake. The house was on fire. Flames belched from the doorway, and Mrs. Craig and the terrified crowd were stopped at the head of the stair by a cloud of lurid smoke, out of which tongues of flame lolled and licked the rafters.

Above the crackling of the flames and other sounds which were produced by the woodwork wrenching itself away from its fastenings, the

falling of the ceiling of the room and the like, there went up a high, bitter cry—

“Oh, my bairn, my bairn!”

Mrs. Craig was going to run into the flames had not Mrs. Nash and a man who was now on the spot laid hold of her.

“What are you doing?” they cried. “You can’t save the child.”

“It’s certain death,” said another, “to go another step.”

“Will it make it any better if you’re burned to death too?” asked Mrs. Sludge.

They held her fast. But they could not hold her thoughts. There was in her heart love for the child, but the thought that was uppermost was, that she had not listened to Johnny when he came first. Had she done so, she thought, she could have saved the child. As it was, she had told him to hold his tongue, had listened to a tale while the fire was growing and spreading. She was guilty. Her thoughts were distraught, for she could hear nothing but the many talking noises of the fire; but she imagined that she

heard the cry of the child there in the room, and, wrenching her arms away from those who held her, she burst through the wall of smoke and into the room.

There was nothing that could have called "Mammy" there. The little mite and the chair it had cooed in were a cinder, and Mrs. Craig fell swooning on the floor; and when the firemen came and had got the fire "under," they found her charred corpse.

Was this all love, or was it partly shame, that made this common woman for a moment heroic? After that, Mr. Craig and Johnny had to live by themselves in Crane Court.

A TRADE TRAGEDY

WE are all vulgar in that mere dimensions impress us unduly. We scorn the common cutpurse, but have a sneaking admiration for the Company Promoter, who, unlike the Phoenix, rises from the ashes of others. We have a contempt for the small shopkeeper, but there are some of those who, in our great towns, have made colossal fortunes by the same means, only on a larger scale, for whom we have obsequious respect. Mr. Wilie of Drumwhin was in quite a small way of business. He had "Haberdasher" over his door, but his stock-in-trade was exceedingly small. He had, however, the making of a salesman about him. He fawned and wheedled to perfection. He was not quite prepossessing in appearance, but had the insinuating manners of "a worm," as Miss Richmond said ; but Miss Richmond prided

herself on her sharp tongue, and besides, she dealt with the long-established Mr. Nibloe, whose shop was on the other side of High Street. Mr. Nibloe had an old and respectable business. He was known as a high-class tradesman, who charged high, but whose goods could be depended upon. He sold things that would wear. In appearance, too, he looked a respectable tradesman; bowed, but not too low; smiled, but not too broadly. He was not in the habit of pressing his customer to look at this, that, and the other thing. Indeed, he had the old-fashioned method, which, as Mr. Wilie said, did very well for the eighteenth century, but was quite out of place at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth. In the earlier epoch, according to Mr. Wilie, the people in the neighbourhood had to come to your shop. Nowadays, what with cheap trains, parcel post, co-operative stores, you must inveigle them there. Now, for that sort of thing Mr. Nibloe was quite unsuited. He thought that excellent wares would still bring people to his shop. Mr. Wilie knew better. He prided him-

self on being up-to-date. He sold cheap. His goods did not wear, he admitted, at any rate not very long, but he argued that that was nothing in a time when fashions were altering every day, and when every one must be "in fashion" or perish. What was the good of having a dress which would wear a century if you tired of it in a year, or if it became obsolete so far as fashion was concerned in half the time? Mr. Nibloe was not particular about "window dressing." Mr. Willie said *he* had more in his window than he had in his shop, and there was a sort of humorous truth in the suggestion. In appearance, as I have hinted, the two drapers were very different. Mr. Willie was a willowy man, with red hair. Mr. Nibloe was not tall, but he had dignity enough for another foot of height. He had a clean-shaven, "shining morning" face—the very same face, only older, that he had when he was a neat schoolboy.

Now these two rival tradesmen were on opposite sides of the same street. Mr. Willie had only newly come. Mr. Nibloe had been there quite a long time. Mr. Nibloe was known to be a man

of substance. Mr. Willie was called "cheap-jack," and was more than suspected of being needy. Mr. Nibloe lived in a little house overlooking the river, which had villa pretensions. Mr. Willie lived over his shop. There was scarcely room for two such shops in Drumwhin in these days, so it became a duel. It was in these early days that Mr. Willie went to his rival and proposed a partnership. There were obvious advantages in such a combination, and he put them well before Mr. Nibloe.

"I," he said, "have not enough of capital, you have not enough of cheek. You have respectability, which is an article the country people want. I have electric light already, and that is what the townspeople want on Saturday nights. You sell good things at high prices. I sell everything at low prices. It is no use in these days trying to make large profits. Small profits, and many of them, is my motto. We are going to cut one another's throats, and which will be the better for that—the one that survives. But if we agree not to cut one another's throats, and only assassinate

the public, we will both be the better for it. Look at the immediate savings. One shop rent—no, I think we ought still to have the two shops, and still appear to compete. The public believe in competition, so we must humour them. What do you say? Shall we put our horses together and go into partnership?”

All this was exceedingly plausible, but Mr. Nibloe thought he saw through his rival. He knew his own customers had fallen off by reason of the competition, but he suspected that Mr. Willie was “at his last gasp,” as he put it, and so he rejected the proposal.

Mr. Willie was not pleased; indeed he felt inclined to be angry, and call Mr. Nibloe a “fossil”; but he thought better of it, and ended by asking him for the loan of £50.

“Money,” he said, “is essential to me. Can you oblige me with a small loan? You see we must make a beginning. Where would you have been if you had not stepped into your father’s shoes and business? But I had no father’s shoes to slip into, worse luck. It will be a very great

obligation if you can see your way. It is not much for a man of substance like you, but it is everything to me."

Mr. Nibloe, with his quiet smile, felt almost inclined to make the advance asked for, so well satisfied was he with himself for having seen through Mr. Wilie's meaning in proposing the partnership. He could spare the money. He thought over it. But why should he assist a man who had already done him an injury by taking away some of his business? Why should he give him the means to injure him still further? If he was on the point of bankruptcy, the sooner it happened the better for him, Mr. Nibloe, and his old-established business. What right had upstarts to come to Drumwhin at all? It had done very well before this cheap-jack came, and would do very well after he had gone. So Mr. Nibloe found some excuse—which was probably a lie—and Mr. Wilie went away. And the duel was now to the death.

Mr. Wilie did not "go to the wall" so quickly as Mr. Nibloe thought he would; indeed, his

premises were repainted in gaudier colours. The electric light blazed brighter than ever. The prices were still further reduced ; and the common people, while they still called him cheap-jack, patronised him. Mr. Nibloe thought he was playing a "low game," but he was playing it with some success, for if he was making no profits himself, he was certainly making it impossible for his competitor to make much. Even some of the old customers—and amongst others Miss Richmond, whose eyes for a bargain were as sharp as her tongue for a jibe—was known to have been to Mr. Wilie's shop. Mr. Nibloe felt it as if it had been a personal insult. He pored over his books for long hours, but they only told him one story, and that was, that while his expenses almost remained constant, his turnover and sales were greatly diminished ; and there was a bitterness in his heart against his rival such as had never been there before against any human being. He girded a good deal at the public who preferred the cheap and nasty to the dear and good. He called them "fools,"

but that did not bring them back to his shop.

Meanwhile Mr. Wilie was as sinuous and obliging as a man could be. He was as supple in his body as he was in his mind. His windows "invited inspection." The whole place was full of bargains. He lost no opportunity of pushing his business, and he felt that every sale effected, every customer secured, was not only a gain to him, but, as he coarsely put it, a "dig in the ribs" to old Nibloe.

As time went on the enmity grew fierce between the two. One would have thought that Wilie might have forgiven his rival when success crowned his efforts and when his profits began to increase. Surely Nibloe deserved some pity when at Christmas time he found his balance on the wrong side of the account, and when he had to have some bills renewed. But Wilie remembered the old rebuff, and hated his rival. It was very vulgar, it was very low, but there it was. Mr. Nibloe's enmity became morbid. The books would not balance. He starved him-

self at home in the little house overlooking the river. He sat without a fire. He was always ill-tempered with his wife now because the weekly bills were higher than they ought to be; every disbursement was like the drawing of a tooth. But all his economies were to no purpose. Things went from bad to worse. He was in arrears with his rent, both for the shop and for the villa; and at last—he dreaded it as if it had been public shame—the villa was given up; the furniture—or the best of it—was sold, and he and his wife went into lodgings just opposite Wilie's shop.

It was a kind of fascination that took him there. He sat at the window and looked at the bright lights, and saw the people thronging in, especially on Saturday nights, and muttered, "fools, idiots." And his wife would sit in the dark room watching him. She "could knit in the dark," she said; but there was no light, and her eyes were red with weeping. It was curious to note how his boy's-face was altered by these months of struggle and by the cruel hand of

care. It was no longer the shining morning face. It was a low-browed, lurid sunset scowl, and it sometimes frightened Mrs. Nibloe. She had done one thing which she kept secret from her husband. She had known of the proposed partnership, and the way it had been rejected in the early days of the duel. Now, as things went from bad to worse, as the bills accumulated, when the bank refused to advance another penny, she herself went to Mr. Wilie one night and asked if she could speak with him.

"Certainly," said Mr. Wilie; "walk into the back shop, ma'am. What can I do for you?"

The phrase promised, but then he added, recognising her, although she was changed, "Ah, Mrs. Nibloe, I think, yes, ma'am."

"Well," she said, nervously fingering the fringe of her shawl, "I came to speak with you, Mr. Wilie, sir" (she thought that "sir" was a diplomatic touch). "My husband isn't so strong as he was, you see, and you were good enough to propose a partnership, Mr. Wilie."

"Yes, ma'am," he said, with a bitterness in his wheedling voice, "but things are altered since

then. I've got all the business now, I had very little then——”

“But you're not hard-hearted, Mr. Wilie,” said the poor woman; “you've well-nigh ruined my husband with your cheap ways, and I was thinking——”

“Did he send you?” he asked.

“No, no, he doesn't know I'm here, but I'm sometimes frightened. He keeps muttering to himself, and—and——” Here the tears which had been in her voice stopped it.

“Well, ma'am, I can't do it. I'm not a blooming philanthropist, I'm a man of business. I've made my own way, architect of my own fortunes, so to speak, and I would sooner go into partnership with Jerry the bellman than with your husband. Mutters to himself, does he? Going mad, ma'am. He was mad when he refused my offer. Mad when he wouldn't hold out a hand to help me, and wouldn't lend me a paltry £50. No, ma'am, I wouldn't go out of the way to help him if he was starving.”

The word “starving” was like a blow, and still

fingering and clutching at the fringe and looking down, the poor woman said in a low voice, "We are starving."

"Then starve," said Mr. Wilie, as he opened the door and she passed out into the shop, where all the lights swam in her eyes.

What Mrs. Nibloe had said was quite true. Horrors yawned round them. One day soon after that on which she had made her appeal to Mr. Wilie, the shop in the High Street where Mr. Nibloe had carried on his long-established business was not opened. Mr. Nibloe sat in the window of his lodging looking at Mr. Wilie's shop and counting the people that went in. He was not muttering, but laughing strangely to himself. That night he struck his wife with a poker, and as the neighbours heard the cry, "Oh! don't, don't!" the police were called in; and when Mr. Nibloe was taken to "the office" he was still laughing, although his poor wife was in a pool of blood on the bare floor. At the office they saw that the man was mad, and sent him on to the asylum.

Of course the news of this outrage spread, and

all the town was talking of it the next day. It soon reached Mr. Willie's ears, and it was with some effort of self-restraint that he refrained from rubbing his hands together. The tragic collapse of his rival seemed to be a sort of compliment to his own ability and enterprise. He even said to his foreman, "Ah, Nibloe was an old-world man. I knew how it would be when I came here. I offered to take him into partnership years ago, but he was too proud then. But pride will have a fall."

He remembered that Mrs. Nibloe had said they were starving, and he had it in his mind to send her some money "rather than that she should starve," but then it occurred to him that it would be a kind of apology for his own triumph, a weakness at the last moment when his revenge was tragically complete. He had said to her "starve," and he would keep his word. So he buttoned up the dog-ear of his trouser pocket and went into his office and totted up the figures in his ledger. That was his holiday.

For a time small streams of charity reached Mrs. Nibloe while she dwelt in the poor room at the

top of the house opposite the Emporium, as Mr. Wilie's shop was called now. She watched the taking in to Mr. Wilie's premises of the shop next door. He now called himself "the Universal Provider." The Town Council need no longer have lighted High Street, for his shops made it like day. But the sources of charity soon dried up, and a day came when Mr. Wilie stood rubbing his hands together on the steps of one of his three shops when Mrs. Nibloe had to go away to the work-house, and she had starved so long that she was too weak to walk, so they had to take her in a cab. Mr. Wilie looked at the front of his premises flaring with gold letters, looked at the shut-up and empty shop farther down the street, and then at the cab into which they were helping the poor woman, and he felt so well disposed that he almost forgave Nibloe, saying, "The man must have been mad all along."

But Mrs. Nibloe had starved too long, and although they did their best for her in the work-house, she died after a week or two, and her last feeble words were, "Oh! don't, don't!"

THE CENTRE OF THE STORM

It all arose out of a dispute about a little wood which grew in some boggy land by a little stream behind a cottage called Howligat. It was not a valuable part of the Squire's property. Indeed, since he had been the owner he had exercised no rights over the little wood, and Mr. Menzies, the farmer at the Wheatstone Farm, had let the grazing of the bog for a pound per annum to the occupier of Howligat, who kept a shaggy pony which was turned out into the wood. A time came when Mr. Menzies thought the grass would grow better if some of the undergrowth of young ash trees, brambles, and some prickly hollies were taken away, and he began to prune and cut. It was this action upon his part that brought the matter to a head. The Squire, when he was informed of what Mr. Menzies was about

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by his keeper, grew red in the face, which was one way in which anger showed itself in the Squire, and his left shoulder lurched up almost to a level with his ear, which was another way in which the explosive force of anger showed itself. The third tap in the barrel of emotion turned on oaths, but the Squire was very seldom so angry as to stoop to that gutter. Now the occasion of this explosion is quite easily explained. First and foremost, Mr. Menzies, who was an excellent tenant, although a quiet, slow man, had a year or two before, on the falling in of his lease, demanded a considerable reduction in his rent and a considerable expenditure on the farm buildings. That of itself rankled. But it was the wood that was the real centre of the storm. The wood was a covert to which, when the big coverts behind the "Cocked hat" hill was shot, the pheasants went in great numbers on their bright wings, and the "bog stand," as it was always called, was always a good one. Now, here was Menzies spoiling the cover in the wood, spoiling it, too, at a time when the Squire, on

the advice of his keeper, had just ordered some thousands of spruce firs to plant in the bog wood. "Oh, it was intolerable," said the Squire, his shoulder heaving.

Just at the time that this unfortunate misunderstanding arose there was domestic trouble at the Wheatstone Farm. Menzies, who was a man with some of the thorns of conviction in his breast, had seduced the woman who afterwards became his wife, and their first-born child was born very soon after their marriage, and was a sickly, ailing lass. This fact Menzies, in his conscience, always thought was a punishment for his sin. "The sins of the fathers," he used to read, "shall be visited on the children," and quite foolishly, perhaps, he always thought that "the poor little lass," as he called the child, was suffering for his ill-doing. His wife, whose conscience did not twinge, tried to dissuade him from his belief, but he kept his idea and tormented himself with it. We, many of us, are flagellants in a small way. Just at the time of the dispute as to the wood behind Howligat the poor little

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lass, Jane Menzies, who was now some eight years old, was in worse health than her poor wont, and had to be put to bed. Her father was anxious for the child and sat beside the bed blaming himself, and would scarcely be persuaded to take his meals. He sat there silently beside the child, staring blankly at the wall, watching the clock for the time of the medicine, and when the poor little lass moaned, as she sometimes did—an inarticulate cry for sympathy—he could have cried out too, so acute was his sufferings, so deep his remorse for having done this great wrong to the poor child.

And then on the top of this came the Squire's letter, in which he said he had been informed by his keeper that Menzies had been cutting timber in the wood behind Howligat, and that he begged to say that in his lease of the ——— day of ——— made between Mr. Menzies and the Squire's predecessor in title (the Squire used the phrase with considerable satisfaction) the plantations had been expressly reserved out of the lease. The Squire was, therefore, surprised at the

action of Mr. Menzies just at the time when he, the Squire, had been about to improve the shooting on the estate by planting spruce firs in the wood. It was then that Mr. Menzies had taken upon himself to cut some of the undergrowth which the Squire regarded as an "unwarrantable and unfriendly act."

This was the letter that came at the untoward time. But Menzies was not going to "bow down" to the Squire. He had, as I have said, that quick-set hedge a conscience, but he had also a somewhat stalwart backbone of stubbornness. Some of the phrases in the letter stung him. "Taken upon himself" was one of them. The word "unwarrantable" sounded like an indictment. But he would not give in. The anger boiled in him, and then he sat down by the bed again, kept his eye on the clock, and felt bitter and angry with himself, and bitter and angry with the Squire.

Wednesday was the market day in Ormsby, but Menzies, contrary to his custom, determined not to go to the town, and told his wife of his

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intention. He was, however, persuaded to go by his wife, and the horse was "put to" the cart, and he went. All sorts of hard thoughts were revolving in his head as he went on his creaking way to the market town. Now it was: "What made the Squire say that? Haven't I paid my rent regular? Why did he stand by and let me rent the wood all these years to Galbraith of Howligat? It's certain that both he and his keeper saw Howligat's pony in the wood. And now, all of a sudden, and without a word, it's 'unwarrantable,' 'I've taken upon myself.'"

Then the next instant his thoughts were back by the bed of the poor little lass. "God knows," he muttered, "why she should be ill like that. If it had come to me I could have understood it; but what harm has she done, poor little lass?"

And his face, which was a hard, rough-hewn face, looked soft, as if there was a cloud of tears in the sky somewhere.

He hit viciously at the horse and went on.

"'Plantations reserved in'—that's a lie, I swear. I'll go to Bates & Sharpe and see a copy of

the lease. How could it be reserved when it wasn't fenced off from the field when I took the farm? Who put up the wire fence, I would like to know?"

Here a neighbour passed him and called out "Good day," but he was so full of his thoughts that he did not answer him until he was out of earshot.

"Something wrong with Menzies," thought his friend. "It's early in the day to have had a glass."

And they went on their several ways, ways which all men make for themselves. Men seem to travel on the same road, between the same hedgerows, under the same trees, and up the same hill, but they do not, they have their own thoughts going all the way with them — thoughts which sometimes make the hedgerows bright as if with flowers, and sometimes make the sunshine as piebald as a whole sky of clouds. Menzies's thoughts were poor company that day.

Bates & Sharpe, although lawyers, dissuaded Mr. Menzies from going to law. Ah, if all lawyers were like that! They pointed out to him that the lease did reserve all the plantations and

shooting to the Squire, and that as the only plantation "answering the name" on the farm was the one in question, that it might be held that that was the plantation which was reserved. They admitted the force of his argument that when he took the farm the plantation had not been fenced off from the adjoining field, and that he had himself put up the fence. But they spoke not unwisely about the uncertainty of law. Perhaps they knew that an action about a spinny which had been let for £1 per annum could not bear very heavy costs. So Menzies left their office still uncomforted. If he could have been assured that he could have "the law on the Squire" he would have felt that glow of satisfaction which is a faint reflection of the fire of hell; but here he was without a remedy, and without what is sweeter, from the devil's point of view, revenge. So he went home again after a glass or two at the "Swan" in Bank Street; but while these dulled him a little, they did not relieve his pain for the poor little lass, nor did they still his enmity for the Squire.

That night, as they sat at tea in the kitchen at Wheatstone, Menzies went further in his grumbling than he had done hitherto, further a good deal than his wife, a robust woman, who "feared God" in quite a comfortable way, approved.

"It makes me doubt a God altogether," he said, when he had pushed his cup from him. "There's the little lass, that never did any harm to anybody. Why should He be so down on her? And her hands as hot and her mouth as dry——"

"Bless me, what's that?" said his wife, with a jump, for a loud noise had broken in on the conversation; and now the wind, following its destruction of a lean-to against the cow-house, went whistling and bellowing round the corner of the house.

"It's only the wind," said Menzies; "it'll blow hard to-night. Where's justice," he continued, "when I've paid my rent for the whole farm and the wood, that he should take it away after all these years, and for what, too? 'To improve the shooting,' mind you. It's enough to make a man doubt a God altogether, and I never did before."

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"Talking like that," said his wife, "is enough to bring down a judgment on the house. See what the wind's done already when you were talking just like an unbeliever. There's the lean-to flat, and you talking about there being no God. I'm ashamed of you."

And with this rebuke she left the kitchen, and Menzies sat with his own thoughts until it was almost dark, and then he went to the room where the little lass lay with hot hands and parched lips, as he said. He sat there with nothing but the flicker of the firelight—a slow fire which only casually flickered in a flame—for company holding her hot hand in his.

"Faither, I'm feared," whispered the child.

"What are you feared for?" he asked.

"It's the wind, faither; it shook the bed, and it rattled at the window, and was like a gaist in the chimney."

So he sat with the hand hot and trembling—like a little swallow in its mud nest in the eaves—in his rough hand.

It was a terrible night that. The wind from

a gale became a hurricane. Folks prayed for the ships at sea. The wind seemed to take the Wheatstone Farmhouse in its hands and shake it. It blew away a stack from the phalanx that stood shoulder to shoulder in the yard. It peeled the slates off the house, and tore off one of the chimney cans and buried it deep in the mould in the garden. After a time, however, this huge lullaby seemed to soothe the child, and she fell asleep, and Menzies, still sitting there, and still with his hand round hers, began to nod. It was far in the night ere he went to bed, and still the storm, which seemed to be too long for a continent, hurried by with thundering feet, and it was only when he too had fallen asleep that the storm drew off its forces and silence patted the tired ears of those who had listened to the hurricane.

Menzies was an early riser, and, before going out to mourn over his stack, which was plastered over the hedges and lay in great drifts against the walls, he looked into the little lassie's bedroom, and she was sleeping quietly, and her

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hand, when he felt it, was soft and warm. Forgetting his blasphemy of the night before, he said his prayers standing over the little lass, for he muttered "Thank God." Then out he went to count the cost of the storm. The "lean-to," he knew, was wrecked. The stack had been torn to shreds. The yard was covered by the house slates, and the chimney can was buried in the garden. Now all this might have depressed him. But no. He remembered that the little lass was better, and although there was no sunrise, for the clouds, all torn and tattered, filled the sky, he felt that it was a fine morning. As he went over the fields to see if the stock had suffered, he noted, which was not common with him, some of the flowers which had opened their eyes through tears to the day, and he said his prayer again there on the sloping field. "Thank God," he said, and if he had been asked why, he could not have answered. It was only because his heart was full, and when that is so it has to lip over in prayer, or laughter, or song. And then, turning his eyes to the right, he

saw Howligat Cottage stand out where it ought not by rights to have stood out, for before that the wood would have hidden it from where he stood. But there it stood on its little green knoll, and the wood—the wood was gone. When he looked again with rubbed eyes he saw of a truth that the centre of the storm had passed over the wood. The trees were all blown down, and lay in confusion this way and that, and in their fall they had broken and destroyed all the underwood. The wood had ceased to be. But when he went and looked closer at the havoc, he saw that the primroses were shining out unbroken by the storm or the fall of the trees, as placid as stars when the storm wrack is blown away.

And this time he said a devil's prayer, although he said "Thank God" again, and went home to the Wheatstone Farm for his morning meal.

When he had said his usual "grace" before meat he said to his wife, recanting all he had said the night before—

"There is a God in the world, I do believe."

“CHEATS ALL ROUND”

THIS is quite a high-class story. Note, however, that I am not praising my own production, but indicating that the tale concerns itself with certain persons who are not in a low class. Thus, to imitate the writers of plays, let me say who are the *dramatis personæ*. The story has to do with a Lord Angram, who was the owner of broad lands and some very high lands, for his estate lay in a hilly country. It has to do with certain gentlemen who are surveyors by profession, some of whom live in villas in Regent's Park or at Wimbledon, and some of them have offices in that throbbing city of London. These facts will of themselves indicate that I am quite justified in using the words “high class” with reference to this veracious history. But besides these I may mention that some “illustrious” members of the legal profession were in the case,

and that one of them, at any rate, has since been raised to the judicial bench. Under these circumstances, I hope my pages will be taken for what I describe them. On second thoughts, however, I think that is the only sense in which it can be called anything else but a low story.

The great town of Hamington, which every one knows is the centre of the worsted trade and also of various other very important industries, was said to be in want of water. The people had about thirty-four gallons a head per day, but that, both in meetings of the Town Council and in a Public Meeting held in the Town Hall, was said not to be enough. There was one man that knew the facts, and he did not speak at either of the meetings mentioned. Robert Bourke was an able engineer, and had been appointed to the responsible office of Borough Engineer by the Corporation of Hamington about a year before. He knew that to rise in his profession he must be connected with, must carry out some great work, and a new water scheme for such a town, with its hundreds of thousands of people, was just the opportunity he wanted. He had

surveyed the country, and had ultimately found an exceptionally good site for a great reservoir. He had made all the necessary calculations, and found that a scheme in the valley of the Avon would cost a large sum of money, that it would yield ten million of gallons of water a day, and he wanted nothing but the opportunity to carry it out. But there was one fact known to him that he did not communicate to the members of the Water Committee, and that was, that if steps were taken to prevent the waste of water, which was taking place in the district of supply, the existing sources would be sufficient to meet all the wants of the town for seventeen or twenty years to come. If he had done so, of course the Avon scheme would not have been adopted. He would have spent his time in detecting waste and preventing the misuse of water. It was these considerations which made him an ardent advocate of the Avon water scheme, so that the first thought of this great undertaking was swaddled in a lie.

The Corporation, on the recommendation of the Water Committee, approved of the application

to Parliament, and the meeting of Ratepayers sanctioned the promotion of a Bill.

The site of the reservoir which had been selected by Robert Bourke was high in the valley of the river Avon, and when his scheme was made public a very astute person, Mr. Newton, Lord Angram's agent, saw that if the scheme was carried out it must put a great deal of money into Lord Angram's, by no means full, pocket. His Lordship's estate in Avondale was a poor one. With the exception of Avoning Park and some good lands near it the estate consisted mostly of hill farms and grouse moors, and Mr. Newton, with the entire approval of his Lordship, set himself to make preparations for a great claim against the promoters, the Corporation of Hamington. His Lordship and his agent were, of course, most anxious to have the scheme carried out, and therefore, under the wise advice of counsel, Lord Angram represented a very strong petition against the Bill to Parliament, it being understood that an uncompromising attitude would be the most paying in the end. Mr. Newton too set to work to increase the rents of the hill farms ; not that the

poor and picturesque pastures which hung to the hill sides would bear higher rents ; but Mr. Newton made the tenants understand that if they paid a little more to his Lordship now, they would not be the losers in the end, and that the more they paid to Lord Angram the more compensation they would get from the Hamington Corporation. And so the game proceeded by conspiracy and cheat, for it is far from certain that Mr. Newton spoke the truth to the tenants. But lies are really the current coin of much of the business of the world. That is proved by the existence of such legal adages as *caveat emptor*. If the seller spoke truth the maxim would be folly.

The Bill was promoted, and some very well-known counsel were retained. An "appearance" was "entered" for Lord Angram, and for a large number of riparian owners and the owners and occupiers of mills on the river Avon. Counsel also appeared for the County Council of West Hampton. The contest before the Committee to which the Hamington Corporation Bill was referred was one of triangular greed. The Cor-

poration wanted to get the Bill, and to compensate all the people concerned with water sent down the stream ; and with the assistance of their able engineer, and with the approval of their astute counsel, they proposed to send down daily about half the quantity of water to which the owners were really entitled. But as Mr. Bonner Blake, Q.C., said, "We won't get off with that, but it is best to offer less than you are prepared to give." The mill-owners, of course, on their side wanted more water than they were upon any principle of equity entitled to. They desired, too, to have all the water sent down during the hours their mills could use the water. The County Council, on the other hand, insisted on a regular and continuous flow day and night. Lord Angram wanted a special compensation clause all to himself, and said that it was only a sense of public duty that made him willing to submit to a Bill at all. That assertion as to "public duty" was a fine stroke. The Committee felt great sympathy with him, said, indeed, that the promoters should deal liberally with his Lordship, and one of the

newspapers published in Hamington praised his Lordship a little fulsomely. But the editor of that paper was a friend of Mr. Newton. The other newspaper spoke of philanthropy and cent. per cent.

The absolute necessity for the water was proved by Mr. Bourke, and the Committee had no alternative but to find the preamble proved, and in the settlement of clauses they increased the amount of compensation water, said it was to be sent down in a regular and continuous flow, and they put in a special clause saving the rights of Lord Angram. It was a good many months after the Bill became law that the Corporation gave his Lordship "notice to treat" for the lands required for the reservoir in Avondale, and then the wits of his Lordship's advisers were set to work to get as much out of the pockets of the ratepayers of Hamington as they could. One of the cards he played was a face card. He asked Mr. Bourke, the engineer to the Corporation, to dinner at Avoning Park. He consulted Mr. Newton, and Mr. Newton went to his Lord-

ship's solicitors, and they in their turn went to certain well-known land agents and surveyors. One of these said that the value of the whole of the land taken, including an allowance of ten per cent. for compulsory sale, was £21,000. But, as two of the other gentlemen consulted said the value with what they called "special adaptability" was over £50,000, the gentleman first consulted was told that his services would not be required. In consequence of that dismissal we refrain from mentioning his name, but may mention in passing that he offered his services as a witness to the Corporation, but as the Corporation made the whole value less than £8000, he was told that he could be of no use to them. I rather think he regretted, after that, the possession of what he called "a conscience" when he saw the gentlemen who were prepared to swear up to £50,000 earning large fees. But he learned the lesson of life, that the judicial attitude, the halting between two opinions, is of no use when you are in a business enterprise. This was in a sense a raid on the ratepayers of

Hamington, which their advisers, seeing that the raiders were armed to the teeth with lies, were quite prepared to resist with similar weapons. A lukewarm man who tried to speak the truth was of no use in such a foray. Perhaps after that experience, he was wiser.

The great compensation case was curious in several ways. Lord Angram and his advisers, even although Mr. Newton had increased the rentals, as we have seen, could not on the present rentals capitalised in any reasonable way, bring the property up to a sum of £10,000. But the "experts" employed had various ways of "swelling" the claim. First they suggested that there were minerals in the property. They had not been proved. The part of the property in question was nearly twenty miles from the nearest market-town, and their suggestion made Lord Angram and his advisers look like fools. According to them, the value of the minerals was to be estimated at the least at £10,000, and where the folly came in was that if they were right the owner of the estate had been letting these

minerals lie in the ground when he might have "at any time" turned them into money, a commodity which, as we know, he was very much in need of. But Lord Angram did not mind being called a fool, nor did he mind a similar epithet being hurled at his father, if he could get the £10,000 by it.

"This," he said at a dinner at Avoning Park, "is no longer a case where one is bound to consider the public interests. It is a mere matter of business. I am bound to do the best I can for myself and for those who have to come after me."

You will have remarked that very often the most selfish men when they are doing a mean action refer to their families.

Then the experts said that the sporting rights were very valuable. But their trump card was what they called "Special Adaptability." At first sight that might have seemed an expression which was peculiarly applicable to the witnesses with their indiarubber consciences. But they used the words in quite another sense. They

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said, looking at the site of the Avondale reservoir we find that the physical contour of the land makes it specially suitable for the construction of a reservoir to hold water. At the place where Mr. Bourke, the engineer, proposes to put his dam the hills come together almost, leaving a narrow gorge through which the river Avon fretting ran. Higher up the valley the hills were more distant, the land flatter, so that the physical construction of the valley was that of a bottle, and the engineers had only, as it were, to put a cork in the neck and you had a place where large quantities of water could be stored for the thirst of Hamington. It was these physical features which, according to them, had made the great town come there. The Corporation was going to get a cheap reservoir. If it was cheap for them, it would be cheap for any large town that required the water. That gave the site great value, and for that element they claimed that the Corporation should pay not less than £15,000. That sum was not nearly equal to what Hamington would save by coming to this site, but it was

what, in their opinion, the owner of the land was entitled to. There was another most ingenious claim made on behalf of his Lordship, and with his approval. These experts said the object of the Corporation is to get water which they say is required for Hamington. Now water in or near great centres of population is a very valuable commodity, and is every day becoming more valuable. In proof of this they said Hamington itself sells water to other Local Authorities in its neighbourhood at 6d. or 1s. a thousand gallons. Now if the Corporation had not got their Bill it would have been open to Lord Angram to make a reservoir there. If he had done so, he could have sold the water to any Local Authority or company which got powers to come there and take it away in pipes for say, to be moderate, 1d. or 2d. a thousand gallons. Of course, from the sum so paid you would have to deduct the interest on the cost of constructing the embankment. But even making that deduction, the value of the water to Lord Angram could not be less than £17,000. Now, adding the value of the

land itself, £8000, to the minerals, £10,000, to the special adaptability, £15,000, and the water, £17,000, there you had it £50,000 for land, the annual value of which in Lord Angram's hands had up to the present time, even with the increased rents which Mr. Newton had screwed out of the tenants, never been more than £219 per annum.

This, of course, was only the view of those who were "retained" to give evidence for the claimant. The views of those who appeared for the Corporation were very different. That body had retained a distinguished geologist, who said there were no minerals in the whole valley of the Avon which had any market value. The stone that was there might do for farm fences, but would be of no use in building the dam of the Corporation reservoir. They had, too, on their side several most experienced engineers, who said that there was no special adaptability on the site. They had made trial pits, and they said that from these they came to the conclusion that the Corporation would have to go very deep, and spend a large sum of

money to get a foundation for their embankment. The valley, too, above the site of the dam was a steep one, so that, although it widened out, it also rose rapidly, so that to store water in any quantity it required an exceptionally high dam. That also meant a large expenditure of money. No, in their opinion, this was not a good site for a reservoir. Then they further said that no other town but Hamington would ever have come there for water. It required a conduit or line of pipes forty miles in length to take the water to Hamington. No other town was within such a distance of this source of supply, and it would not pay any other town to make a longer conduit to get this comparatively small quantity of water. There was, therefore, no value in it as a site. They did allow something for the water, but their principal element of value was the present and prospective value of the land as agricultural land—very poor at that—and a moor. The present rentals being £219, they were, they said, liberal in multiplying that by $33\frac{1}{3}$ years' purchase. That gave £7300, and ten per cent. for compulsory sale made the

total of their valuation £8030. They allowed £2000 for the water, and that made £10,000.

This was the case which took three or four days to lay before the two arbitrators and the umpire, and on which they were called upon to decide. Very learned counsel were employed on each side, and Lord Angram gave his counsel very large fees, as he was assured by his solicitor that under the Lands Clauses Consolidation Act these fees would in the end have to be paid by the Corporation, so that he could afford to be liberal.

One thing strikes me at once, and ought to have struck that tribunal, viz. that if the Corporation's case was well founded, the case on behalf of Lord Angram looked very like a conspiracy to obtain money by false pretences. Had all the actors of this ingenious little drama only been on a lower level in social life, had the stakes that were being played for been pounds or shillings instead of thousands of pounds, one might have expected to hear of the actors or players again in a criminal court. If a man who carries a pack tries to sell you a gewgaw at the door, and represents that the

brass article is made of gold, and gets a few shillings by reason of your credulity, he is liable, I believe, to be indicted. Not so the claimant in a great compensation case; and what is curious in this regard is, that this idea never did occur to any of the shrewd counsel who were engaged in the case, to any of the surveyors, or to the arbitrators and umpire. They all thought it the most natural thing in the world that Lord Angram should ask a great deal more than he was entitled to, and that the Corporation should say his land was worth less than it was worth. That was the game. The diagonal of truth, I suppose, is produced from the parallelogram of lies. One very pertinent thought did occur to the umpire, upon whom, in the end, the “burden of the reference” fell, and it was of a piece with the noble sentiments which were in the minds of every one connected with the case. He said, to himself of course, “I must try and arrive at the real value of this land, but if I give a very liberal award, then it is certain that the Corporation would never consent to my acting as an umpire in any case

they might have in future." Indeed it occurred to him that an award very much in favour of either party might be the means of preventing him being appointed in similar cases in future. Prudence, therefore, unmistakably pointed to moderation, if not to compromise.

Whether these wise thoughts had any influence on the amount awarded it would be difficult to say. But the sum he found Lord Angram entitled to had a curious likeness to the figure which would result from adding £10,000 to £50,000 together and dividing by two. He had been requested, however, to make his award in the form of a special case, and that case was taken to the High Court and discussed there. The points were: Could the umpire allow anything for special adaptability? Was he right in allowing anything for the water? If both of these were answered in the negative, the amount of the sum awarded would be £12,000; and if, as Lord Angram said, the Court decided any such folly, then he "was being robbed, that was all, being robbed by the Corporation for whom he had done so much."

The Court before which the case first came was a Radical Court. I mean, the judge who had to decide it was, or had been, a Radical. Of course that made no difference to his view of the law, but may have accounted for some words, which were perhaps unnecessarily harsh and offensive, which he used with reference to Lord Angram. He ought to have remembered that his Lordship was acting through his agents and advisers, as no doubt a Conservative judge would. But as to the law, he made a kind of compromise. He said Lord Angram had no claim in respect of the water. He was an ordinary riparian owner, could not sell the water so as to enable any one to take it away, and that the compensation clause in the special Act, by which water was given in lieu of money, covered all his rights. As to special adaptability, he said Lord Angram might have a claim—a claim for the value of a reservoir without water. So the award would stand at £18,450. Lord Angram very nearly swore when he heard the result.

But the Corporation were not satisfied with the judgment, and took the matter to a higher Court,

and there it was decided—it seemed common-sense, but it may not have been, because that is not a common product of those somewhat arid pastures—that there was no such thing as special adaptability as inherent in the land itself, and that to give that quality to any site a market or demand for it must be found. One of their Lordships said a perfect site for a reservoir, when it could be constructed for a nominal amount, and impound as much water as was required in the island of Lewis, could have no value, so they again reduced the amount awarded. And this time Lord Angram did swear, and he vowed that he would never more have regard to the public interests, and that he was sorry he had not opposed the Hamington Corporation Bill and thrown it out. When, however, the £12,000 and the costs (and these were very heavy) were paid to his agent, Mr. Newton, by the Corporation, and that gentleman had to report the fact to his Lordship, which he did one fine morning in the morning-room at Avoning Park, he said—

"Well, after all, my Lord, we have done very well."

"Do you think so, Newton?" asked his Lordship, through whose mind the same thought had been surreptitiously passing; "do you think so?"

"I am sure of it," said Mr. Newton. "Your Lordship never had more than £167 out of these farm lands that were taken by the Corporation, and once one of the farms was on your hands a whole year without a tenant. But even taking it at £167, that makes the capital value about £5000 at the outside. There are no minerals that are worth a brass farthing in the land—I satisfied myself of that before the arbitration; and as for the 'special adaptability' and the 'water,' I never believed in them."

"Well, neither did I," said his Lordship; "still, I should have liked the money."

"Of course you would," said Mr. Newton; "but there you are with the £12,000, and I may say not one of our expert witnesses thought we would get so much."

"Well, it's not so bad," said his Lordship, and then affably added, "you've done your best all through, Newton, I'll say that. Have a whisky and soda?"

CRIMINAL

WEIR—James Weir—had, as many do, married for love. That very often means that the man had not married for money. A young man meets a young woman, he admires her, he courts her, especially if other men desire her; he calls it love, and he marries her. When one sees how ill such matches turn out, one is almost persuaded that it would be better for men to marry under the dictates of prudence than of such idle whims. Weir's marriage had been one of these. His wife was as pretty as most girls—had a cheek where the blood made sorties; two blue eyes, a soft voice, which seemed to hint at song in ambush; and she had turned the heads of half the young men in Whernside. That was enough. James Weir was quick to fancy, and quick to act on his fancy. He married while he was still little more than

a boy. That was one of his excuses afterwards. James Weir was the owner of an impoverished estate, which yielded just a sufficient income to bribe him to do nothing, and far from enough to satisfy his many wants. Had he been poor, had he gone into a profession, he might have become a useful member of society, only an insignificant cog in the wheel of the world. Indeed, Dr. Johnson said, I think, that a man was harmlessly employed when he was making money. A profession and hard work keep many a man out of mischief. "A use in measured numbers lies," and a great use in methodically measured days is to be found by those whose erraticisms are steadied by the great flywheel of work. But James Weir, as I have said, lived on his means. He had an active mind, and dabbled in a dozen things to fill the empty days. He was something of an artist. The servants said he was a "great student," but that was only because he got catalogues and collected books. He even wrote "a little" himself. He was also fond of sport, went now and then to fish in Norway, shot his own

coverts, grumbling because they were so small. All his life seemed to be smattering to fill idle hours which ought to have been given to labour, and which were given to pleasure. His wife filled some of his empty time, until, alas!—it is a sad confession—he came to know her, and then, he tired of her. He was a vain man, and used to say to himself, “It takes a cleverer woman than Nellie to be a companion for a lifetime to a man like me. She’s not up to it. Well, it’s not her fault.” And that before he had been married a year.

Whernside Hall was an old-fashioned, gloomy house, but just as a thick shady wood is made bright and lovely by the birds in it, for a time the rooms at the Hall—her perches—were made bright by her presence and her snatches of song. But that palls on a man. He was for a time kept true to Nellie Weir, his wife, by jealousy. Before her marriage she had “been a toast,” as the old phrase goes. She had a way of attracting men’s eyes, and where their eyes go their hearts follow. After her marriage she had what her

husband called her "hangers on," and, strange to say, the jealousy of these kept such love as he had for her alive. When he saw other men's eyes rest on her, he looked at her, and saw that she was as pretty as he had thought her. When other men "dangled" after her, he felt half inclined to court her himself. But this was a passing phase. Jealousy only kept his love alive for a little while. And a time soon came when he was indifferent to her, did not care whether other men admired her, and, even worse, a time came when he wished one of them would admire her more. He even, in a mean, little way, connived at an intimacy, and that all because his whim had passed. He was tired of his wife, and thought he would be untrue to himself—that was the way he put it—if he loved her still.

That attitude towards his wife came about a year after their marriage, and there was something to account for it, and that was another woman. Whernside is in Sallowshire, and the Lord-Lieutenant had asked Weir to the Castle to a

shoot. Glad of anything to relieve the monotony of life, which, as he said, had been doubled by marriage, he went ; and at the Castle he met what, if he had cared to use the language of the *Family Herald*, he would have called "his fate." Lady Edith Sannox was a very different woman from Nellie Weir, and Weir told himself that all the differences were in her favour. She was prettier than his wife, but that did not count. It was not the mere outside wrappings that a man wanted in a wife. This woman had a soul. That was the way he put it. It is quite true men judge of the possession of a soul by a standard of vanity. I have known a man who had talked to a woman for a whole evening—a woman who had never put a word in or interrupted him, but who did condescend on a sympathetic "Yes" or "No," and used her eyelashes—declare that woman to be one of remarkable intelligence ; in fact, a woman with a soul. Whether it was on such grounds that James Weir judged of Lady Edith Sannox, who was the only daughter and heiress of the Earl

of Duddingstone, I do not know ; but he certainly fell in love with her the very night he took her in to dinner at the Castle. "Ah," he said, when he was undressing before the wardrobe glass in his room—"ah, if I hadn't been a fool and married Nellie! Not that it's her fault. She's only a doll. But this is a woman. If I could have married her, with her position and her money I might have been in Parliament—in the Government. Heaven knows what I might not have been!" He was admiring himself in the glass, and thought he had a look of Pitt. "Curse it," he continued, "and here I am bound for life. How different it would have been if I could have married this woman. I never did really love Nellie. It was only to triumph over other men that I carried her off—and now! She is no more a companion for me than a hedge-sparrow would be for a Golden Eagle."

You see his vanity was not a shy bird. "Curse it," he said again, as he got into bed. And his dreams were not about his wife.

James Weir was a man who scattered his atten-

tions and affections over a number of subjects and objects. He used to reason that the modern man must be an "all round" man, with wide sympathies and general interests, and that that type of man compared favourably with that of earlier days, when all a man's light was, as it were, concentrated by a bull's-eye. In the old time a man was a hermit or an anchorite, and all his thoughts illuminated only religion, or a chemist or a poet; and even then they were men of single rays. The modern man must be everything—a man of the many-sided world. He prided himself upon being a smatterer in knowledge and affection. "The man," he said, "who is too much in earnest is mad."

But now, strange to say, this new passion for a woman not his wife belied his creed, as very often love does, and he found himself absorbed in it to the exclusion of all other thoughts, all other desires. He left his home for a fortnight, and went to London to meet Lady Edith. He came home, and was almost brutal to his wife. His first thought—that if he could have married

Lady Edith her social position and her wealth would have let him go far towards the goal of his ambition—had fallen into the background. It was the woman, and the woman only, that now commanded his allegiance. His love for her—and he was candid enough about it—made him hate his wife.

It was at this juncture that two memorable things happened. His wife's "hanger on," as he called him, whose success in ill-doing Weir had secretly wished, was snubbed by Nellie Weir, and gave up coming to Whernside Hall. That was one; and the other was, that the devil put a great temptation in James Weir's way. One day in going through some old papers which had belonged to his father, and on which the air's sedimentary deposit of dust had been undisturbed for years, he came upon a little packet marked "Poison." He looked at it curiously. "Poison," in black letters. It was a white powder, but that told him nothing. It had too on it the name of a chemist in Torquay. Torquay is two hundred miles from Whernside. How had the poison come

there? He had never heard that his father had been at Torquay! But there was a white powder purporting to be poison in his hand. His first act was suspicious—it showed that some devil's suggestion was working in his brain. He emptied the white powder into another paper, and destroyed by fire the paper which bore the word Poison on it and the name of the chemist at Torquay. He then sought in his library for a book on poisons. Was it arsenic? An encyclopædia would describe that. He had too a book on medical jurisprudence somewhere, but could not find it. He ultimately made up his mind from his reading that the white powder was arsenic, and that there was enough in the paper to kill three or four men. It is strange how the mind circles round its object, like a moth round a candle, before it darts. When he came to that conclusion, there was in his thought an emphasis on the word *men*. He even deluded himself for a time with the idea that he was planning his own death. "Life is not worth living," he said, "when it fails of its only

ambition. I have never been in dead earnest about anything before. Every motive until now has been a whim. This is a life and death affair." He shuddered, for he had used the words inadvertently. "It is no use shutting my eyes," he went on. "I cannot live without her." "And this"—he was referring to the white powder—"may serve my turn."

But his next proceeding was a strange one. There was an old retriever called Dash in the stableyard. He had had an abscess in his ear, and was quite deaf. Weir had often thought that it would be a kindness to have poor old Dash shot, but had always hesitated. After all, he was an old friend.

Now, however, he took him some meat, on which he had sprinkled some of the white powder, and watched him while he ate. That night he heard that Dash was dead. He felt like a murderer, but he went out and asked full particulars as to how he died. Having heard the coachman's story, he went into the house again and consulted his books. He had found the

medical jurisprudence by this time, and now he made up his mind that the powder was arsenic. Then he locked it away in a secret drawer in his writing-table, and persuaded himself that although he had heard how Dash had suffered, that he had done the kindest thing after all. And he added—it was a curious addition to his thought—"I had made up my mind that he ought to be shot long before I saw Edith."

He had taken to writing letters to Lady Edith, and she had foolishly answered them. Her letters were locked in the same desk as the white powder. If he killed himself, he thought, he would have to destroy the letters first. This was how he deceived himself—he still pretended to himself that he meditated suicide. But he was a reasoning being, and after reading one of Lady Edith's letters, and reading, as he told himself, between the lines, he swore to himself that she loved him. It required a good deal of careful reading to discover it, for Lady Edith, although indiscreet to write at all, when she did write, wrote with circumspection. Human hearts, in certain conditions,

are easy to convince, and James Weir was persuaded that she loved him, that nothing stood in the way of the one earnest wish of his life, of his happiness, but his wife. "Why should he kill himself? That would make Edith sorry. Did he want that? Perhaps his wife even would be sorry. Why should he die just when life had brought him something worth living for?" This was his reasoning, and he took out the white powder and looked at it.

The next day he was hovering round the matter again. "Don't we think far too much about the sacredness of human life? It is one of the cant phrases of a hypocritical day. Human life! Does a dynasty think of it if it wants a throne? Does a statesman think of it when he declares war in order that he may hold office? This caring for 'life' is a mistake. We keep people alive by our science when they are suffering, and it would be more merciful to let them die. Death was meant to be chloroform, and we won't administer the anæsthetic." He was evidently no longer thinking of suicide, but imagining

another way out of the difficulty—the way Dash had gone.

He seemed almost to persuade himself that if Nellie were to die, it would be the best for everybody—best for him, for he hated her; best for her, for she too must be miserable. They were quite unsuited to one another. They could not live together. He was a deep pool (that was his own misdescription), she was a fribble shallow. But still he had a scruple—he could not kill her in “cold blood.” These words were the only thing that remained to him of a conscience. So he picked a quarrel with her one day at dinner. He picked up a lie for an instrument, as men will on such occasions, and accused her of having encouraged Captain Monkswood, when he knew in his heart that she must have kept him in his place, for he had not been at the Hall for a month. But, like a lion, he lashed about with his tail to get up his anger, talked about his “good name” (and this was the man who had the white powder in his desk), of how she had degraded herself, and so on. He succeeded in exciting his own

passion and hers. She too had her grievance—suspected a great deal more than she knew—but she knew enough to retort and sting him. There was no “cold blood” now. He was vexed and angry, felt the whole of this life intolerable—when it might have been so different—and that night his wife was taken ill.

He heard of it from the servant, and went up to see her reluctantly. She was lying on her bed. She had been very ill. There was a clammy perspiration on her brow, her pulse—he put his fingers on it—was fluttering.

“Are you better?” he said. Although his conscience was a flame of fire, he spoke as if he was sulky.

“Yes, thank you,” she said, but her voice was quite feeble, and she stretched out a cold hand to take his, and whispered, “I beg your pardon. I thought I was going to die.”

“Oh, nonsense,” he answered. “Something has upset you. You’ll be all right to-morrow.”

“Oh no, I won’t. But if I die, you’ll forget what I said to-night, won’t you? and—and I’ll be sorry to die now.”

"Why?" he asked in some surprise, for there was a sobbing emphasis on the "now."

"Bend down," she whispered, and he bent his ear to her lips, and she whispered something.

The flame in his conscience leapt up and burned his brain, so that he staggered as a man might do in a house on fire.

He drew his hand across his brow, and then with compunction bent over his wife and kissed her cold lips.

Then he thought he must do something, and ran downstairs and got brandy, and made her swallow some. He knew what was best to be done, having read so carefully; and although she was ill again after the brandy, after a time she was better, and having put his hand to her head as if he were blessing her and said good-night, he went back to his own room.

He had made up his mind, he would take all the poison that remained. He was a murderer in thought, in deed, and was unfit to live. He took it out and looked at it, but he thought better of it, and threw it in the fire and watched the paper burn.

"I almost killed her," he said, "and her child.
O God!"

The next day brought two surprises—Nellie was better, much better, and there was a letter from Lady Edith. No necessity to read between the lines now. There it was fair, and large, and plain to read in her own handwriting. She was going to be married to a friend of Mr. Weir's, Captain Monkswood. All that she wanted now was that Mr. Weir should wish her joy.

Now it is strange that after that the married life of James Weir and his wife was happier than it had been before. It was true there was now a mediator in the house, and that the affection of each of them was centred in the little one, and from this small centre a love which seemed to illuminate them both seemed to emanate. As time wore on, habit, a very kindly factor, stood their friend, and in the years which followed you could not have found a more contented husband and wife than James Weir, murderer, and Nellie Weir, flirt.

TOOK'S COURT

It is said that one swallow does not make a summer, but that I deny. It is the first of everything that has magic. The first swallow brings the temperate south into our forbidding north. The first rose crowns the year, and is worth all the blooms which crowd upon us later. And the first love! That is a revelation! When the heart wakens it is morning.

It was an odd corner for that sentiment to find a place, the squalid yard, a rubbish eddy off a street which was itself only a slum. But the sun shines sometimes even upon odd corners, and its rays are only made the more visible by the dust in the air. The boy was a kind of guttersnipe. He had been brought up to think thieving no crime. When he could get a thing for the asking, he begged. When he could not get a thing for the asking, he took it

without. It was before the days of School Boards, and his education had been miscellaneous. He read in the great book of the world. He understood a man's face, and knew when there was pity in his muscles, and when it was safe to stand out of way of his stick. A useful education for a boy whose life had to be lived in Took's Court. His companions—and he had many, with whom he fought often and played games, which were generally provocative of police interference—called him "Prince," why, he did not know, and they did not know, but on both sides it was regarded as a compliment. He was in a sense a God-sent prince, for he ruled the rest, partly on account of his greater ability, and mostly by reason of his greater depravity, for that was the groove all his cleverness ran in. "The Prince," they used to say, "will stick at nothing."

Now to suppose that real love could enter into such a gamin's heart may, to those who have only seen the passion in the glass case of a drawing-room, seem ridiculous. But it was there. The boy was only approaching manhood. He was at a period of life when all the ape-like cleverness of

youth is unrestrained by the cautiousness of age, at the time when, if the heart is going to open at all, it opens, and sometimes upon a quite unexpected provocation. There was a girl who came to live with her drunken mother in a single-room house high up one of the filthy stairs which led out of Took's Court. The mother did charring, and the daughter made matches. The mother may have been comely in her day, but now she was bloated; her eyes, bloodshot in red rims; and when she was "in drink," and that was as often as she could afford it, the language she used was in perfect keeping with Took's Court. And no writing of mine could give a better idea of her dictionary of garbage than that. The daughter was decidedly pretty, and seemed quite out of place in Took's Court. She had, in Prince's eyes, the bearing and manners of a lady, and he had been to the Park and seen ladies, and had an intimate acquaintance with Music Halls, so he ought to have known. She did not swear, and that, to Prince, whose vocabulary of oaths was a large and varied one, seemed unique. She was, too, industrious. She went to the manufactory

every day. That of itself struck Prince as being extraordinary.

Regularity and punctuality were quite rare virtues in Took's Court. For her sake Prince helped her drunk mother up the rickety and evil-smelling stair which led to her room on a Saturday night, and the girl who was on the landing waiting, looked her thanks, and Prince, when the door was closed, and there was no excuse for waiting any longer, danced downstairs. It was thus, as I say, that the firstlings of his heart began to bleat, and the new sunshine surprised and delighted him. He had not been conscious of loving or caring for any one before. He had admired Benjamin Wace, a carter who had fought five rounds in the yard with a bigger man than himself and beaten him. But admiration is not love. He had felt pity once when he saw a poor little dog run over by a brewer's dray and heard it howl. But pity is not love, and he always felt ashamed of the sentiment since then. But here he was in a new condition—dancing, because two pale-blue eyes had thanked him for helping a

"drunk and disorderly" up a stair, caring for that much more than he did for the whole 6½d. in coppers which was his whole fortune at the time—and, strange to say, when he was "snuggled up" in the rags which did for bedclothes, and he had fallen asleep, dreaming of the girl—ah, that was a crowning experience. He had seen her in that sacred place, sleep—and that to his mind seemed a kind of betrothal. After that he neglected his companions, but devoted himself to his curious business with assiduity and success. He held horses, and hoarded the coppers that were given him. He ran errands, literally ran, and he began to feel the pleasure of amassing wealth. In a few days he had over 2s. 6d. laid away. He waited about at nights on the chance of doing the Good Samaritan to Mrs. Creech, and was up betimes to see Mary Creech start for the manufactory. He became as careful of his personal appearance as his limited wardrobe would allow of, and although in the past he had set his face against personal cleanliness, which he regarded as a feminine fad, he now invested in a

piece of soap, and when he met Mary in the morning his face shone like the sun, and his hair was all drilled into decorum by water and a brush, which was afterwards used on his boots. There is no doubt about it, love had come into Took's Court, and nested in one little heart there.

Mrs. Creech was very late one Saturday night, but Prince was waiting for her as she rolled into the court and collapsed in a confused heap in the doorway which led to the stair. Here Prince joined her, and tried to raise her up and get her to go upstairs; but the alcoholic poisoning had gone too far for that. There was one advantage in that condition which occurred to Prince's mind, and that was, that "she was too bad to swear." She was so bad, that he had to perform offices for her which made him blush; but what will not a man, or boy for that matter, do for love? He was clumsy at washing up; but he succeeded, shuddering, before Mary, wondering what had become of her mother, came down the stairs and found them there in the flickering light of a gas flame which was blown all awry by the

ragged gust of night wind. They had to let her lie there until she had recovered herself, and then in the cold grey of a winter morning they helped her up the stairs, and Prince saw her lurch into the bed; and as she began to swear he went out, for he thought the girl would not like him to hear these oaths. It is thus love teaches delicacy to quite harum-scarum hearts.

Prince had not spoken about love—indeed, he did not know what to say—to Mary Creech. But his eyes had told her all about it, and Prince flattered himself that her eyes were not silent. He was quite unduly elated perhaps, but it is not uncommon for love to build very high hopes upon very insecure foundations. But were they insecure? Not at all. He had asked her to “walk out with him,” and she had consented, and he met her at the door of the match factory, and they walked. Once, only once, when they reached Took's Court and the doorway—the wind had blown out the gas-light this time—he ventured to kiss her, and there was no resentment in her as she ran upstairs, while Prince was divided between delight and the sense of his temerity. He

thought himself bolder really than Benjamin Wace—to have kissed Mary, and “she quite a lady.”

But the course of true love, even in Took's Court, will not run smoothly. When Prince had accumulated more than £1—although he had out of his earnings spent 6s. 8d. on a hat for Mary, which she walked out in—another person came on the scene. That was a big, hulking fellow, some twenty years of age, who came hanging about for Mary in the evenings. Prince's jealousy was up in arms. He hated the man, and could not see anything in him which a girl like Mary would fancy. He was big and clumsy. Every one of his defects was grateful in Prince's eyes. But he hung about and waited for Mary, and she walked out with him, and in the hat that Prince had bought for her. The thought of this man touching Mary made him hot and sick. So he waited for him. It was almost dark, for the gas-lamp had not been repaired—repairs did not often visit Took's Court—and when Hollis, that was the man's name, came near the door which led to the attic, Prince sprang out at him and struck him in the face. There was no necessity for explanation.

They both understood what the business in hand was. Prince fought desperately, but Hollis was a larger, stronger, and older man, and quickness and courage, alas! don't make the odds in such a case even. Some of the neighbours looked out into the court while the fight was in progress, but such events were too common in Took's Court to call for more than a languid interest. Prince still fought, although he could scarcely see. His blows were wild, but his spirit was inveterate. At last the end came. By a foul blow Hollis brought the battle to a close. Prince fell to the ground unconscious. Mary Creech had been watching the fight, and she came downstairs and joined Hollis. Hollis hinted that perhaps he had killed him, and Mary suggested flight. It was then that Hollis stooped over Prince as he lay there and robbed him of his earnings, of his all. Then Hollis and Mary left Took's Court, and Prince was found there in the morning. It was true he had no longer any need of money. And the verdict of the jury—there had been a dozen such in Took's Court—was “by some person or persons unknown.” And so they buried Prince.

A TALE TOLD BY GOSSIPS

THIS is rather a haggard story. Every one knows that Lady Edna Entwhistle, who was the daughter of the Earl of Roxholm, and who had married Colonel Entwhistle, lived in Linalp House, near Nettleby, after the death of the Colonel. She was a woman with faded blue eyes, a limp manner, and an agreeing mind. She thought and said that there was a great deal to be said for the last view of any subject presented to her. The last word with a woman of that sort is decisive. She would agree with you while you were speaking, and agree with your opponent when he was answering your argument. She gave largely in charity, not because her heart overflowed and took money with it, but because she thought it was a kind of Christian duty, and a method by which you could put money on deposit receipt in heaven. But

she had "quite a reputation" for charity in and around Nettleby. People spoke of her as a nice, kind, ladylike woman, and to suppose that she could have been guilty of the death of Dr. Ransome seems absurd. But Mrs. Ransome always said that Lady Edna had killed her husband. How it came about is the subject of this haggard tale.

Dr. Ransome, who had lived and practised in Nettleby, had a very high reputation as a physician and surgeon. I dare say his skill got the credit for some of the good deeds of a healing nature; but all reputations, like an amateur's game at billiards, are full of flukes. Some of his successful operations were spoken of far and wide, and his practice, which was at one time a large one, extended for many miles round Nettleby. He attended almost all the county families, and was Lady Edna's doctor.

The doctor had a son who had gone into the army and cost him a good deal of money, so common report said, and a daughter who really was Lady Edna's god-daughter, and had been

called after her. Edna Ransome was a very pretty girl, and had turned a good many heads in Nettleby. Only one of "her conquests," as the gossips of Nettleby called them, has any connection with the matter here on hand. A certain Captain Blake had been resident in Nettleby for a time, and as he was a handsome man and "well connected," he was asked out a good deal. He spent a good deal of his time at Linalp House. He played tennis well, and as Marion Entwistle was also a player, they spent a good deal of time together, time enough to make Marion fall in love with his handsome face and broad shoulders. So much in love was she, and so clearly did she show her partiality, that it seemed to most people that she proposed to him daily. The gossips had it that "she was setting her cap at him." Such persistent devotion would no doubt have succeeded, for Marion had good looks, and would, when Lady Edna died, come into an income of £2000 a year, had it not been that Captain Blake had seen and fallen in love with Edna Ransome, the doctor's daughter. Marion was not long in

finding out how the matter stood, and although she and Edna had been great friends before, now, as one can understand, the coldness of an iceberg came between them, and Marion would have felt that she was untrue to her love for Captain Blake if she had not hated the rival who had stolen his love from her.

She had, too, a sharp tongue, and soon persuaded her mother that her god-daughter was a very flirty, flighty, unprincipled girl. Edna Ransome had not really been guilty of any wrongdoing in this instance. If there was blame anywhere, her good looks must bear it; for when Captain Blake had at last to leave Nettleby to join his regiment, and when before going he asked Edna to be his wife, she refused him, and he went away sorrowful. A few months after his departure a tall weedy youth, who was rich and reared hackneys, and whose name was Kenrick M'Lure, proposed to Marion Entwhistle, and she accepted him, and shortly afterwards they were married. It was quite a grand wedding, and the list of the presents filled a whole column of the *Nettleby Standard*, and

amongst them there was a paper-knife from Miss Edna Ransome. One would have thought that after her marriage Marion would have let bygones be bygones, but while the two girls still called each other "dear," there was deep down in Marion's heart a little black well of spite and hatred.

It must have been two years after her marriage that Mrs. M'Lure was paying a visit to her mother at Linalp, and the two years had made great changes. Marion heard, not without some satisfaction, that Dr. Ransome was looking quite old, and that people said that his practice was not nearly so good as it used to be. The gossips, you see, were still alive.

"And how is Edna Ransome?" asked her old friend.

"Ah, poor Edna," said her Ladyship, "I'm sorry for her. You remember how pretty she was, and she had such a good style. Well, she's gone off in her looks very much. She hasn't been to see me for some weeks, but I really think she must have had some disappointment in love. You remember two or three years ago we thought she was setting

her cap at Captain Blake, but of course he would have nothing to do with her."

"Of course not," assented Marion, and the waters of the little black well in her were stirred, and it was not by an angel.

So they gossiped on until it was time to dress for dinner, and at dinner there was no conversation about anything but Mr. M'Lure's hackneys, and the prizes he had won at the Highland and Agricultural Show, at Islington and elsewhere. And Lady Edna in her faded way pretended to be much interested in that and in a new tapestry stitch which Marion had taught her. But she went early to bed, and the next morning did not come down to breakfast. When Marion went to her mother's room she found the washed-out blue eyes in tears, and the poor lady was holding tight to the bedclothes with her limp, purposeless hands. The good lady had a real heroic struggle to keep her screams to herself; but she tried, for she had an idea that screaming was not ladylike, and she regulated most of her conduct by that sanction. We all must have some external rule

of life. Catholics hold by the Church, Protestants of the Presbyterian type swear by the Bible, but Lady Edna tempered her right of private judgment by the ideal of conduct becoming a lady. Already the groom had been sent off to Nettleby to ask Dr. Ransome to come at once, and Mrs. M'Lure was almost sorry her mother had taken that step. When her mother's agony permitted her she reasoned with her after this fashion—

"I think you were wrong, Mama, to send for Dr. Ransome. You said yourself he was getting quite old."

"Oh, he's very clever, Marion."

"Oh, nonsense, Mama. Every one says that Dr. Bain is far more up-to-date than Dr. Ransome, and naturally, of course, he is younger. Dr. Ransome, of course, is quite an old man. You said, only last night, that he was looking quite old, and that his practice was leaving him. If I were you I would have Dr. Bain."

"Oh, Marion, think how many years I've known Dr. Ransome. Then he knows my constitution."

And if I did say he was looking old, I meant that I thought he looked worried. That son of his that went into the army, I fear, has turned out a heart-break. Mrs. Ransome doesn't say much, but I think he must have run into debt, and poor Dr. Ransome has had to pay them."

"Well," answered Marion, "it's his own fault. He should not have allowed him to go into the army. But that's the way with the middle classes, they always want their children to be in a better class than themselves. I don't see why, because he has had trouble with his son, you should not have the best advice, Mama."

"Well," said Lady Edna, almost convinced as she always was, "we might have Dr. Bain too."

But here another paroxysm of pain put an end to the conversation, and before it could be resumed Dr. Ransome arrived. Dr. Ransome was a slow man, but he was a sure man too. He had had a long professional experience, and many people still had confidence in his professional skill. But it happens to most men that they outstay their welcome in the world. In

youth their toes gall the heels of their seniors, as age approaches they in their turn are jostled from their place, and this was what was happening in the case of Dr. Ransome. Younger men were in the field, and youth is itself a decoration. His practice had fallen off, as Lady Edna and the gossips said, and that at a time when his son was doing his best to break his old heart and cripple his small resources. Still the Doctor was proud that he still had some of the best families on his list. He resented the brusque competition of Dr. Bain, a man with a good deal of self-confidence, but he still prided himself upon the fact that he attended Lady Edna Entwhistle and Sir George Dashwood.

He found that his patient was really ill, and when he had an interview with Mrs. M'Lure and her husband, he said it was possible that an operation might be necessary. He hoped that it might not, but before deciding the matter he would like to have another opinion. Mrs. M'Lure suggested that perhaps Dr. Bain would do.

That was like a slap in the face to the old man,

but he said with some dignity, although his voice was not so steady as it had been before—

“Of course you can call in Dr. Bain. He is a young man, but I have no doubt that he is able. I would myself have suggested the expediency of calling in one of the heads of the profession from London, for the case is a grave one; but, of course, you must do exactly what you think right.”

“Of course,” said Mrs. M'Lure, “we must have the very best man.”

And so it was settled that Sir Alexander Boord should be consulted, and he was written to accordingly.

Mrs. M'Lure had been foiled so far; but the next day at dinner the little black well which was in her heart overflowed, and all because her husband, who had during the day been in Nettleby, had seen Edna Ransome, and after saying so, added, “She is still thunderingly pretty.” It was not a nice phrase, but it was enough to make his wife feel prickly.

When Marion went to her mother's room she

found Lady Edna in great pain, and she easily persuaded her to send for Dr. Bain.

"I don't believe Dr. Ransome is any good, and Sir Alexander Boord won't be here till to-morrow. We must send for Dr. Bain."

Her mother was always easy to convince, and so the groom was despatched, and Dr. Bain came.

Of course the whole transaction was contrary to what is called "professional etiquette." But there he was, and he examined Lady Edna, said he was convinced that an operation was necessary, but that as Sir Alexander Boord had been called in, nothing could be decided until his arrival. And with that luminous opinion he took his leave, promising to call again on the morrow.

Marion M'Lure felt the kind of satisfaction that devils may be supposed to feel when they have done ill successfully. She really was jealous of Edna Ransome; and when her husband said the next morning that he would go into the Club at Nettleby and keep out of the way of the doctors, for it was "deuced slow" at Linalp,

she suspected that his real object was to see Edna Ransome again.

The three doctors met and discussed the case in his absence, and Sir Alexander thought that possibly in a day or two there might be a necessity for an operation, but left the matter to be decided at a later stage. He pocketed his fee, assured Mrs. M'Lure that everything was being done for her mother that could be done, and returned to London by the afternoon train.

When he was gone Marion carried her ill-feeling very far, for she said in Dr. Ransome's presence—

"Dr. Bain, if an operation is necessary, I think Mama would like you to perform it." And having spoken a dagger, she left the room.

Dr. Bain looked at Dr. Ransome, and saw that he was wounded to the quick. He would not have minded that very much, for he was a self-assertive man, who if he hurt a man by treading on his toes, thought it was the victim's fault for having corns; but he did not like to perform the operation, for it was a difficult one, and so he said—

"Of course, Dr. Ransome, if an operation is necessary, and I quite agree with Sir Alexander, I would not think of performing it, notwithstanding what Mrs. M'Lure is good enough to say. You are in attendance, and I would never think of interfering."

Dr. Ransome did not trust himself to speak; but when he told his wife and daughter when he went home what had happened, they both thought he was weeping, although no tears came.

There was only one gleam of satisfaction in these gloomy days, and that was that his view that an operation would not be necessary was soon shown to be the right one; and the fact that he had held that view, even when Sir Alexander was doubtful, and when Dr. Bain was convinced, to some extent lightened his load of care—for it was a load. All his savings had gone. His practice had dwindled. His own health was fairly good, but he counted so many years now, that he could not count on many more. The thought that his wife and daughter would, if anything should happen to him, be left in

poverty haunted him, for he had sacrificed them to the needs of a worthless son, and to the necessity for preventing his good name from being smirched.

But one day he drove to Linalp House to see Lady Edna, through a driving snowstorm. He was quite proud when he was able to assure the poor woman—who had a dread of the knife—that no operation would be necessary, and that although she must take care, he thought she was now quite out of danger.

And then came the *coup de grâce*. It had been all planned by Marion, who had over-persuaded her mother, and who kept a sharp eye on her while she made the hesitating announcement.

“I’m sure,” she said, “I’m very much obliged to you, Dr. Ransome; and I am very glad that the operation isn’t necessary—but, of course, as you advise it, I’ll take the greatest care. I don’t suppose it will be necessary for you to come any more, especially as you now see Dr. Bain is in attendance, and two doctors make one think oneself very ill——”

And then she lamely stopped.

Dr. Ransome only bowed and left the room.

"I'm sure he's hurt, Marion, very much hurt," said the poor woman, who did not like doing this mean thing.

"I don't care," said Marion, with a savage little smile.

Meanwhile the doctor was passing through the long white wavering folds of the storm on his way back to Nettleby. He felt the cold more than he had done, and the great flakes were tossed bitterly in his face by the pitiless east wind. When he got home he said to his wife that he thought he had got a chill and would go to bed, although it was still early. She did not remember his doing such a thing before. But he went.

When she went to his room to see how he was, she found him sitting by a reluctant fire, and tears were running down his cheeks. It is sad to see a child weep, although you know that its smiles are in ambush in its eyes, and will jump out anon; but to see a man weep—oh, it is pitiable. He told her all that had happened, how he had been dismissed! dismissed!

At the time she had scarcely time to think of the injury, for her anxiety was uppermost. Her husband was shivering, and when he had laid him down on the bed, he never rose again. He died in three days after that, and his wife always said, and there was a grain of truth in her words, that Lady Edna Entwhistle had killed him.

There was sufficient truth in the assertion to make this tale, which the gossips of Nettleby told, a haggard one. It might have been more so, for the fact is that Mr. M'Lure, the famous breeder of hackneys, had become enamoured of Edna Ransome, troubled her with his addresses, and even wanted her to run away with him. She was sorely tempted, not by love, but by poverty, and a desire to be revenged on Marion, who had been her dear friend; but Mr. M'Lure was a weedy, lanky, unprepossessing man, and his success in breeding hackneys is not glamour for a girl—but because she was a good girl after all, and she refused. And the tale is saved from the last touch of horror which it might have had.

GUILTY

THE body was found in the field path which leads from the village of Low Head to Weatherby. Some labourers going to their work early in the morning came upon it and gave the alarm, and the doctor from Weatherby, Dr. Cunningham, was upon "the spot," as the police say, within an hour, and found that life was extinct, and that in all probability the man had been dead for five or six hours. There were marks of violence on the pale thin face, and it was even hinted that the man had been done to death by some one. The dead man had been a clerk in the mill at Weatherby, a mill where they manufactured tweeds and woollen cloth, and had always, it was said, borne a good character. No one knew why he should have been murdered. The object could not have been theft, for Nelligan, the dead

man, was not wealthy, and his small sum of money, £1, 6s., was found in his pocket, and his watch and chain had not been taken. "This was," therefore, according to the sage opinion of the village policeman of Low Head, who at last realised the importance of his office, "this was no case of murder for robbery." He said this as if he knew more than he cared to say, but, as a fact, he did not. The intelligent force in Weatherby discovered that Nelligan had been paying attentions to a young woman at Low Head, and surmised that he might have been on his way to visit her, or returning from such a visit, when he met his death. It was also ascertained by these sleuth-hounds, the police, that a man named Ward had also been paying his attentions in the same quarter, and their suspicions, of course, fell upon Ward. With the diligence which was to be expected of them they pursued this clue, and ascertained that Ward had been away from home on the evening before, that he had been seen in the Kirkgate of Weatherby talking with Nelligan some time about seven on that very night. All

these facts only pointed in one direction, and that was that in all probability Ward was the murderer. It is at such junctures as that in a man's life that an enemy gets a chance. In most cases, although enemies can slander and libel those that they hate, these lies don't live long, and a man is none the worse for the venom that they spit at him. But when, as it were, life and death hangs in the balance, an enemy's kick may upset the beam. Ward had an enemy. He had slighted a woman, and she was not a woman to forget such an injury. She heard how suspicion was flying in the direction of Ward, and she went to the police and lied to them. She said she had been on the footpath from Weatherby to Low Head the night before about ten o'clock. She had just come to the place where over the stile the field path joined the lane that runs beside the Seathwait wood, when she heard voices. One of these was high-pitched in anger, and she recognised that of John Ward. She knew his voice well, she said. The other voice she did not recognise, but she gathered that the men were quarrelling. Then suddenly

she heard a noise like a blow, and a voice cried out, but she could not hear the words. Then there seemed to be a scuffle, and then a fall. She was frightened, and did not go nearer, but after that a man ran past her, and she could swear that it was John Ward.

This was sufficient evidence to act upon, and upon the night of the day when Nelligan's body was found John Ward was taken into custody, and the next morning he was charged with the murder of James Nelligan, and in due course was committed for trial. He protested that he was innocent; said he was on friendly terms with the deceased; that he had spoken to him in a friendly way about seven o'clock the night before his death in the Kirkgate; that he had parted from him there, and never seen him again; that he had not been near the field path from Low Head to Weatherby that night, and knew no more about the murder than the child unborn.

He was warned that anything he said might be used against him, but he adhered to his story, which was in fact true. Suspicions are only

gropings for truth, and in this case in the dark they had laid hands on the wrong man.

The story of the crime was simple enough. Nelligan, the murdered man, although he was only in Messrs. Murray & Geddes' mill as a clerk, was a natural son of one of the small squires in the neighbourhood of Weatherby. Mr. Inglis of the Brae, although he was now married and respectable, had "sown his wild oats" in his time. And although he repented his indiscretions now, there was this living memory of an escapade which he would have liked to have forgotten, and would even more have liked others to forget. He had grown-up sons and daughters by his wife, and the presence in Weatherby of this son, gotten, as they had it in their brutally picturesque way, "on the wrong side of the blanket," was a constant reproach to him. He had attempted more than once to induce Nelligan to leave Weatherby and to try his fortune elsewhere; but that young man thought he saw his advantage in remaining where he was, and when brought to bay with a bargain, he asked such preposterous terms to leave, that his father

had to put up with the annoyance and the shame of his presence. The negotiations as to the proposed change of residence had gone on for some time, and had become somewhat crusty, so much so that Mr. Inglis latterly had refused to see his son Nelligan, and had intrusted the further negotiations to his eldest son, the half-brother of the murdered man. All the recent meetings of these two had been secret. Young Inglis was as anxious as his father was to get rid of Nelligan, but was also most unwilling to be seen with him, and therefore their meetings had all been in places where they could converse without interruption, and without the presence of eavesdroppers. In fact, they had more than once met and talked on the little footpath which leads through the fields from Weatherby to Low Head, and most of these meetings had taken place after nightfall. As a fact they had met there close to the shadow of the Seathwait wood on the evening that Nelligan met his death. Already the night had fallen, and so dark was it that, when Nelligan approached, Inglis called out—

"Is that you, Nelligan?"

"Yes, it is me," answered the other, in a voice with a snarl in it. "I tripped at the last stile and nearly broke my neck. You'll be sorry to hear that I didn't, eh?"

"No, I don't want you to break your neck, but I want you to clear out of Weatherby."

"Well," growled the other, "that would be one way of clearing out anyhow, and it would save Mr. Inglis some of his grudged guineas. He grudges them to me, but not to you. What have I done? Was it my fault that I came into the world? Why should I have to work my life out in an oil-smelling mill while you ride to the hounds?"

"Come, come," said Inglis, "we have been over all this before. You know very well my father is not mean. He offered to pay down a large sum if you would go away. It may be true that it is not your fault, but it was his, and as a son you should not desire to be reminding him of that fault all day long. You know how the world looks at such things, and you ought to spare him. He is your father."

"A fine father forsooth! Did he do the honest thing by my mother? No. Why? Because she wasn't a lady. She was good enough to kiss and cuddle, but not to marry. Father! What has he done for me? He lets me go into a mill and toil my days out, while you live like a gentleman; and now when he wants me to go away from Weatherby—he kept me away from it trying to conceal his fault when I was a boy—but when I've come here and got a good place in the mill, he wants me to throw it up and go away, and why? to save his face. Has he saved mine? Who put the mark of bastard on me? He did."

It is no doubt true that anger is the cause of wild words, but it is also true that wild words are the cause of anger. Men talk themselves into a fury, and that was what Nelligan was doing now. Some one has said that the reason why so many men try their hands at autobiography is, that each man is or thinks himself the greatest living authority upon the particular matter in hand. The reason why men fan the flame of passion by the breath of talk is not far to seek.

All talk is meant for persuasion, and passionate talk is meant for passionate persuasion. And it is quite certain that if the angry man's eloquence fails to convince his hearers, it seldom fails to convince himself. But the truth is that Nelligan, although he began by being irascible, was now in a towering rage. And when you throw cold water upon hot anger it hisses and splutters. That is what Inglis did.

"I tell you I have heard all that nonsense a hundred times. I came here not to hear you thump a tub, but to see if we could not do a bit of business. You who are in a mill ought to understand that."

"Oh, sneer away. Yet I'm your elder brother."

"Will you listen? My father is asked to pay the piper, and he has a right to call the tune. He says, and this is his last word, that he will stop the allowance he has made you if you remain in Weatherby, but that he will pay you the same allowance as he has done in the past, and also a sum of £200 down, if you will go away and promise not to return to Weatherby. Bless

my soul, there are better places in the world than that poor hole of a provincial town."

"Oh, are there?" snarled Nelligan. "And I suppose I have to thank you for this. You were good enough perhaps to suggest that he should stop the pittance he gives me. It would be something in your pocket, no doubt, and in that of your high and mighty sisters. I've seen them with their heads in the air. Think a deal of themselves no doubt, and pass me as if I was a beggar—while, if I had my rights——"

"Come, Nelligan," interposed Inglis, "I've stood this damned impertinence too long. Leave my sisters out of it. It is a fair offer, and you can take it or leave it. It is not for my sake that I want you to go. It does not matter a damn to me, but I think you ought to have some thought for the governor, damn it."

"Oh, damn away, but don't damn me. Just remember I'm as good as you are, although my mother wasn't a so-called lady."

"Nelligan," said Inglis, drawing his breath through his teeth.

"Don't try to bully me," said Nelligan, and put out a hand, whether to strike or to push Inglis from him it was impossible to say, but his hand came in contact with his half-brother's cheek.

"Hands off," cried the other angrily, and raised his own arm to ward what he thought might be meant for a blow. The smallest action may be misconstrued when the blood is up, and Nelligan imagined that this action, which was meant for defence, was really an attack upon him, and he struck at Inglis wildly in the dark, and for a few minutes the blows rained, and there were muttered curses on both sides. It was, as far as the dark would allow, a fair fight, but one of Inglis' blows from the shoulder at last brought Nelligan to the ground, and he lay there.

"An ill-conditioned brute," muttered Inglis, as he went away in the dark, thinking he had knocked his man "out of time," but not knowing that he had left a dead man on the field path.

It was not, although it may seem strange to say so, until twenty-four hours after that that the tragedy began. It was then for the first time

that Ralph Inglis heard of Nelligan's death. He had during the day rather been priding himself upon having taught the impudent "hound" a lesson. He had never for an instant thought that the man he had struck was dead. Now when he heard that his dead body had been found in the field path the thought that some people might call him "Murderer," "Cain," was distinctly unpleasant to him, although he assured himself in his own conscience that he had never desired or thought of the man's death. He thought it best therefore, on the whole, to keep his own counsels. He had mentioned to his father that his talk with Nelligan had come to nothing, and that the man was "as pig-headed as ever," and nothing further had passed between them as to the matter. Now when the news of a murder was brought to Brae, he thought it safer to hold his tongue than to say anything about what had taken place. The matter would soon blow over, he assured himself, and as no one else could be accused of having murdered him, there was no reason why he should mix himself up with the ugly matter. If he did speak

the whole matter would have to come out, and his father's past, which they desired to keep hidden, would become the common field for gossip to browse on. So he said nothing.

Two days after that Ralph Inglis heard that a man Ward had been accused of the murder, and had by some silly magistrate been committed for trial. The thing was absurd. How could Ward be suspected of it? It was impossible for a jury, even if it came to a trial, to find him guilty. They did not hang innocent men in England nowadays. Still, was it not his duty, now that an innocent man was in prison, to come forward and prove his innocence by saying, "I did the deed"? Then how was he to account for the delay in his confession? The authorities might take a very different view of the deed from the true one. They would, when the facts came out, find that he had a motive. Nelligan himself had hinted that he would have been rejoiced if he had broken his neck at the stile. Would they believe him if he said Nelligan struck the first blow? Of course not. They would say, "You

killed the man. If it had been an accident, as you say, why did you not mention it to your father? Why did you not come forward when you heard the body had been found, and say you had done it? You were afraid, and only now when another man is in jeopardy of his life you come forward and speak." All this was quite evident to him. These were his tragic hours.

He persuaded himself, however, that after all his silence could do the accused man Ward no harm. It was true that some stupid country magistrate had thought there was sufficient evidence to send him for trial. It was true, as he had seen by the Weatherby newspaper, that some woman had lied and had said she had seen Ward in conflict with the dead man. But when the matter came to be tested by a real judge from London, when the facts were sifted through the close heads of counsel, the man was sure to be acquitted. Had he, he said to himself, been really guilty of murder he would have given himself up; but as he knew that he was innocent, as he

knew that in the eyes of God it was only death by misadventure, was he bound? He thought not.

And so the days passed for the young man—seemingly quite ordinary days, but really days of torment. “What,” he would say, as he lay sleepless on his bed at night—“what if the worst came to the worst, and if the jury found Ward guilty, and he was condemned to death? What would he do then? Would he confess? Would he allow an innocent man to be hanged? Although he had not been guilty of a crime up to now, that would be murder of the worst type—cold-blooded, calculating murder of a man against whom one had no cause of complaint, no occasion for anger, which after all is Nature’s sanction for many a rash act.” All these weeks, although his father and mother and sisters did not know it, the lad was in hell.

After these hateful weeks, during which the case seemed only to get blacker against Ward, for there was no evidence of an *alibi* forthcoming, and Inglis had assured himself that that must be to hand, and would clear the man, an ominous-

looking letter reached Brae, addressed to Ralph Inglis. It was a summons to attend as a juror at the Weatherby Assizes, to be holden at the Guildhall, Weatherby, on the — day of —. What did it mean? He had never been summoned as a juryman in his life. Of course rather than go he would pay the fine. But it was a strange fatality. Then a soothing thought came to him, that it was only his conscience which was becoming morbid. Of course there were a dozen cases to be tried at the Assizes, and some were only civil cases. It might be on one of these that his services were required. If he took no notice of the summons and paid the fine, that might of itself appear suspicious. He determined to attend, and he went.

In the little square at Weatherby, on one side of which the Guildhall stands, there was all the common and tawdry pageant of an Assize. Javelin men stood at the doorway. Little knots of people stood on the pavement, some discussing their own affairs, and some discussing the murder trial which was coming on. He made his way, under the

directions of a policeman, to the place reserved for jurymen in waiting. A new thought had come into his tired head, and that was, that this call as a jurymen might be the means of extricating him from all his troubles. If he were on the jury empanelled to try Ward, he could prevent his conviction. It would be in his hands to refuse to return a verdict of guilty. He might even persuade the other jurymen to a verdict of not guilty. At any rate, no one could compel him to agree to a verdict that he knew to be a lie. At the very worst, the jury would be discharged, and that of itself would be a point in Ward's favour if he had to be tried a second time.

He was, therefore, almost half elated when he found that he was to sit on the jury that was to try the innocent man. He had not, so far as he knew, seen Ward before, but when he was put into the dock he looked at him eagerly. The man looked pale and careworn. But he had not, Inglis told himself, a guilty look. Still that was because, he admitted to himself, *he* knew who was guilty. How would that carewornness appeal

to the judge and the other jurors? Then he looked at them. There were half-a-dozen good-looking, bluff, ruddy farmers, beef-fed gentlemen. But he knew how obstinate these beef-fed men were. They would think of making the roads and lanes of their native Sallowshire safe o' nights, and would think an example of a man who from jealousy went and killed a neighbour was what the law wanted. The others were of a different type. One was a sallow man, with a face like a ferret. Inglis did not like his look. Such a man would go agilely through the burrows of the case, but would have blood at the end. One of the jurors, from the way he put his hand up as the supplemental flap to his ear, was evidently deaf; and one of them had a barking cold, which interrupted the proceedings at every critical juncture, and prevented any one hearing the evidence given during the paroxysm which shook the jury box.

His inspection of his colleagues did not reassure him; so he turned from them to the judge, who was now in his red cape and wig, on the bench

talking on some quite indifferent matter to the High Sheriff. The High Sheriff seemed—like a roasted chestnut which gets in the process too big for its shell—to be getting too big for his red uniform, still he survived.

Now the case was called on, and Inglis was sworn to “well and truly try the prisoner at the bar.” And the counsel for the prosecution was about to begin his opening when, it being announced that Ward had no counsel—Inglis started—the judge appointed a Mr. Caytone to defend him. Here Inglis blamed himself. He ought to have sent Ward money to get a counsel, to get the very best. He had been relying on the fact that the man would be well defended, and here was a stripling—a friend of the judge—ah, that was a chance—appointed at the last moment to try his maiden merits on a murder case. However, thank heavens, he, Inglis, was on the jury.

Now the case was proceeding. Counsel for the prosecution was telling what he said was a very simple and clear story. “The man Ward

had been—quite unreasonably, as he could show—jealous of Nelligan, had been seen speaking to him in the Kirkgate of Weatherby. After that there was no evidence as to what became of either the victim or the criminal. He inferred that Ward must have followed his victim, must have dogged his steps to the quiet, unfrequented lane between the town and the little country village of Low Head, and then the suggestion was, that he had picked a quarrel with Nelligan. He admitted that there was one difficulty about the story, and that was that Nelligan had been seen in conversation with the prisoner at the bar about seven o'clock, and that the murder had not taken place until about ten o'clock. But whatever was happening in the meanwhile, and as Nelligan was dead, the only man who could throw light on that was Ward. Luckily after that the story became luminous, for he could call before them a woman of the name of Prime, who had been on that field path at ten o'clock that night, who could by her evidence, he believed, make it clear that there was no possibility of

doubting Ward's guilt. His learned friend for the defence might suggest that the woman Prime bore the prisoner a grudge ; but it was absurd to suppose that she would perjure herself to wreak such a diabolical revenge on the man, even if he had wronged her. It was for the jury to say whether they believed the evidence or not. If they believed it, they had only one thing to do, and that was to bring in a verdict of guilty."

Then the witnesses were called. The whole thing hinged upon the woman Prime's evidence. She gave it well ; but Inglis knew that she was lying, and his gorge rose to think how a woman could stand there in open court, kiss God's book, and then by her lying words take away a man's life.

She was cross-examined by the young gentleman who was conducting the defence, but she stuck to her story. "No, she could not be mistaken in the voice. She knew Ward's voice well. It was quite dark, but she recognised the man that ran past her." What was she doing there at that

time of night? She had meant to call on an acquaintance at Low Head, and went out after tea for the purpose, but when she got near the village she heard the old church clock chime the half-hour, and she thought it was too late, and she turned to go home again.

There was nothing to be made of the woman. The young man for the defence did not call any evidence—he had none to call—but he addressed the jury. He asked them not to believe Mrs. Prime's evidence. She had admitted that she had had a quarrel with the prisoner. She gave her evidence in a way which would not, he submitted, commend itself to the jury. How had she come to the scene of the tragedy at that late hour? Her reason was ridiculous. Going to see a friend at Low Head. The clock struck, and she turned back. Was that likely? It was easy to trump up a story when one had no conscience, and when one hated the man against whom it was told. If that was untrue, the whole thing was untrue. They had a grave responsibility. It was their duty to give Ward

the benefit of the doubt—if there was serious doubt. It was better that ten guilty men should escape than that the law should do to death one innocent man.

Then the judge summed up fairly; but, as he said, the evidence was all one way. If the jury had any reasonable doubt as to whether the man did the deed or not, it was their duty to say so by their verdict.

They were then told to consider their verdict, and were taken out of the court into an adjoining room. Inglis, as they went, felt now hot, now cold, as if he had an ague fit; and yet none of the jury had expressed any view concerning the case. When they were all seated, one of the red-faced farmers got up and said—

“Gentlemen, I move that Mr. Inglis, a gentleman we all respect, takes the chair!”

Then he was corrected by several others.

“Move him to be foreman of the jury, John.”

“Well, ain’t I doing it?”

Inglis “took the chair” and said—

“Now, gentlemen, I have on the evidence”—here

he blushed red—"made up my own mind as to this case, but before I express my views I would like to hear what you have got to say."

There was a pause.

"Well," said one of the beef-fed gentlemen, "I didn't like the way that woman Prime gave her evidence."

"She ought to be hanged if she hasn't spoke the truth," put in another.

"Gentlemen," said the man like a ferret, "the judge said the evidence was all one way."

"Ward looks an honest man," said Inglis, not liking the trend of opinion.

"Now, do you think so?" said another juryman. "I thought he had a hang-dog look. And he never said a word for himself."

"Why, he couldn't say a word for himself," said a critic, "when he had counsel to defend him."

"But he never denied that he was there."

"Didn't he plead not guilty?"

And so the conversation went until the sallow man said—

"Look here, we've got to make up our minds.

The man Nelligan was murdered, wasn't he? Well, who did it? Well, the only one that's suggested is Ward. And if he didn't do it, where was he? His counsel says that after he had spoken to Nelligan in the Kirkgate he had gone off in quite the other direction, and that he had been to Braintree. Well, maybe he was. But they said it was odd that Mrs. Prime went out and turned back. Why couldn't Ward bring some one from Braintree to prove that he was there?"

"That's true," said several voices when he had concluded.

"Ay, ay—they call it an *alibi*," said one, the man with the cough.

What was to be done? Inglis saw that they had made up their minds against the man. If he stood out for a verdict of acquittal what would they infer?—that he knew more about the matter than he pretended, or had been proved in court. If it came out now that he, Inglis, had really done the deed what would be the consequences? Awful! He had allowed another man to stand his trial knowing him to be innocent. He,

the guilty man, had even acted as foreman of the jury. It would not do to resist the general opinion unduly, but he must do something. He could not sit there and hear a man's life taken away, for a crime of which he himself was guilty. Yet he must not do too much or that weasel of a man would suspect him.

"Gentlemen," he said, "it is a serious thing taking away a man's life."

"It is," said one of the red-faced farmers.

"I'm sorry for poor Nelligan."

"And we must do nothing rashly. I did not like the way Prime gave her evidence any more than Mr. Glover did, and if the man's to be hanged, it's on her evidence. Are we sure enough to say guilty?"

"We are!" said several voices.

Inglis felt hot and cold again in quick fits as he asked himself if he dare say more.

"We are all agreed," said the fallow man.

There was a long pause.

"Gentlemen," said Inglis feebly, "let me implore——"

"We're all agreed," said the barking man, and coughed again.

They rose and were taken back into court.

"Gentlemen, are you agreed on your verdict?" asked the Clerk of Arraignment.

"We are."

"Do you find the prisoner guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty"—and it was Inglis that said the word.

He sat down nearly fainting, and they brought him a glass of water.

He knew that the judge was passing sentence of death, but he did not hear what was said.

Ward was protesting his innocence, and saying too that it was Prime who had sworn away his life. But he was removed, and the thick hot court was cleared, and Inglis found himself outside, and walked away in the gathering gloom of night, marked like Cain.

Then there were three weeks of torture. He wrote a letter—but dare not sign it—and sent it to the Home Office, saying that Ward was not guilty, that further inquiry should be made. But the Home Office cannot be expected to take much

notice of unsigned letters. He tormented himself. Could he stand by and see an innocent man die for a crime he had committed? That would be murder. He was the real hangman. It was impossible. But to confess now—was that possible? Every step he had taken since Nelligan's death had made confession now impossible. He had hesitated to confess that by a blow in a fair fight he had killed a man. Could he now confess to having stood by and seen an innocent man walk through the dark passages of the law to the scaffold? What would the world say to his having acted in cold blood to compass this man's death? He had been on the jury. He had pronounced the fatal word "guilty" in court. That was murder, brutal murder. There never had been such calculating murder as that before, and all this against a man of whom he knew nothing, except that he was his innocent victim.

There was to be a petition in favour of the criminal. Would the Crown commute the sentence to one of penal servitude for life? If they did, there was a chance yet. He would leave no stone

untuned to prove Ward's innocence. But three weeks—what could he do in three weeks? Inglis had what we call a conscience, and for these three weeks his conscience was hell.

The Home Secretary saw no reason why the law should not take its course.

The morning of the execution came. Inglis had not been in bed all night. He had wandered about his room, and then, as that was too small, he went out and wandered in the fields. As the grey morning dawned he was close to Weatherby gaol. It was eight o'clock! Had there been a reprieve? Were they going to carry out the sentence? There was the sound of a bell, and then the black flag was hoisted, and its sullen folds hung heavily in the misty air.

Then Ralph Inglis made for home, and at the Isle steps he had to cross the river, and then he left the road and crept through the close-growing trees, and plunged into the deep, muddy pool below the bridge. And it was two days before his body was recovered from the swollen stream.

A LAW FOR THE RICH

MR. EGG BUCKLAND was a man of position and a member of the House of Commons. He had married the eldest daughter of Lord Compton Giffard, who was himself the second son of the Marquis of Anglesarke. It is obvious that there could be nothing but blue blood in the veins of his family. The Egg Bucklands were an old family, and what is almost as important in these days, they were very rich. Mr. Egg Buckland's lands lay close to Hampton Haven, and Hampton Haven had recently become a great coal port. Twenty years ago there had been only one house at Hampton Haven—the Ship Inn, the small windows of which looked out to sea over the sleek water of the Haven and past the green island of Hestan. Now there were huge docks in the Haven. The smoke of many trains trailed all

round it. There were some twenty thousand people in the town which had "sprung up," and the exports of Hampton Haven amounted, according to the Board of Trade returns, to 4,000,000 tons of coal in one year. The marriage of Mr Egg Buckland to Lady Aileen Compton Giffard was therefore, as the poor people said, "a great affair." Mr. Egg Buckland was member for the county, and Lady Aileen was a great beauty. As she was a great beauty, she was unwilling to nurse her first child—a son—and Janet Reid, who was the daughter of the gardener at Buckland Castle, and who had been married to a seafaring man, named Dennis, who had sailed away soon after his wedding and had never been heard of since, was engaged as wet-nurse to the heir of all the Egg Buckland estates.

It is a somewhat curious thing that favours received generally produce enmity in the recipient, while favours done are the means of love in the doer. And yet it is not strange after all. A man who does me a favour, who helps me when I am in a strait, who ekes out my poor resources,

convinces me of my own incompetence, or it may be my own impotence. While if I do a favour to a man, if I sacrifice my own ease and comfort for his well-being, if I work hard that he may rest and sleep at ease, surely I am arguing with myself, convincing myself of my own excellence. And so on this grindstone of a man I am sharpening the great instrument of self-respect, which is the quality which makes me feel like God.

So it came about that Janet became attached to the little plump mite that hung at her breast, and loved the heir to all the Buckland estates even more than his own mother did. But that was natural. Lady Aileen was a woman with many demands upon her time. She had to go everywhere. She had a place in society. She entertained largely, and she almost persuaded herself that her round of pleasures were moves in the great game of politics in which her husband was pretending to take a hand. There were ample excuses for her seeming carelessness of her son and heir. But he was well cared for. He had, when he could run, the run of the spacious

nurseries at Buckland Castle. He had so many toys that he cared very little for them, and when they were broken, as they always were, they found their way to the gardener's cottage, where, even broken and lame as they were, they were more prized by Janet's own son than they ever were in their integrity at the Castle.

When Theo Egg Buckland was old enough to strain the leading-strings of youth before breaking them altogether, he was often at Reid's cottage, where Janet still lived, and where the boys became in a sense friends. They were the same age, and had the same interests. What youth of ten years of age has no interest in birds' nests and the eggs in them? It is in these early years that the sap of nature runs in our veins. When the spring comes, and the woolly buds begin to creep on the boughs, and then to open wings like those of butterflies—when the birds are looking for forked branches, and begin to chirp of the nests they will build anon—then the boys' minds are opening too, and their hearts are chirping. The woods are their playmates. Every stone is a plaything—

a ball. Sport is everywhere. So at that time the boys were great friends, and played at Red Indians and settlers' hut, and other hairbreadth-escape games on the three islands which lay in the lake in the park. And when you have been in such conspiracies together, you ought to be friends for life. Janet Dennis was proud of the two boys, and always in her heart blamed Lady Aileen for not being more of a mother to Theo; but Lady Aileen's neglect made Janet more of a mother to him, and when there was a dispute between the two boys, as there often was, and she was appointed arbitrator, she generally decided in Theo's favour, although she would "make it up" to her own son afterwards, and he soon saw through the policy. But the friendship was broken when Theo had to be sent to a preparatory school; and when he returned to Buckland Castle for the holidays there was some condescension in his companionship with Tom. However, Tom was a willing admirer. It was of Theo that, upon Drake's Island as it was called, he "learned to smoke." The accomplishment was not fully

acquired in that first difficult lesson; but when one is young one looks up to one's instructors, and although, as a fact, Tom learned no good from Theo, he respected and admired him. It was the consciousness that he had this respect and admiration that induced Theo still to continue on terms of intimacy with Tom, and show him some photographs which he had not shown to any one else, and tell him of some great doings that they had at school on the night before they broke up for the holidays. So things went on until Theo went to Eton. How much he grew in a night he never knew, but he felt a man after that.

It was just when Theo had gone to Eton that Mr. Egg Buckland, who had represented the county for seventeen years, was raised to the Peerage as Baron Buckland of Buckland. This was a birthday honour, but all the critics of the ministry agreed that it was well deserved. Mr. Egg Buckland had been a model member. He had spoken very seldom in the House, and when he did speak, he spoke ponderously, as if his

words were heavy with the weight of thought. He never had been regarded as a dangerous man, as a man with ideas is. Indeed, ideas are the explosives which threaten all institutions, as much as Guy Fawkes with his gunpowder did our Parliaments. Mr. Egg Buckland had been a model landlord, and would certainly add weight, if he did not add liveliness, to the deliberations of the House of Lords. There were private rejoicings at Buckland Castle on the day he took his seat.

It was only a few weeks after that that Lord Buckland had a disquieting letter about his son from his house master at Eton. The story was that several boys in Bulmer's House had lost or missed things of value. At first the servants were suspected, of course. But in time suspicions fell on the Hon. Theo Egg Buckland. He had been accused, and after denying all knowledge of the missing articles, admitted, but only when he thought his rooms were to be searched, that he had found some of the articles concealed in his room. Who had done it he did not know, but

believed it was one of the boys who had a spite against him. He would not mention the boy's name. It was with deep regret that Mr. Bulmer had to bring these facts to his father's knowledge. The boy's conduct had not been satisfactory in many ways since he had been at Eton, and Mr. Bulmer suggested that the wisest course would be to remove him at once.

There was a sad consultation on this letter at Buckland Castle. Lady Aileen wept until her little island of cambric in a surf of lace was sodden. Why had Theo done it? She had never grudged him anything. She sent him a "fiver" (that was her word) only a week ago, and she wept again.

"I," said his Lordship, "have nothing to blame myself with." This, in his slow, solemn way, sounded like an indictment of his wife. "I have given him every advantage. Why should he steal a few studs and chains? It is deplorable, deplorable."

And then he set out for Eton to remove Theo. So Theo left Eton and returned to the Castle.

But meanwhile arrangements were made to place him with a clergyman. "Such an excellent man," as Lady Aileen said, "living in quite a sweet rectory in Hampshire. Lord Buckland is wounded to the quick by it, but he really has taken it all better than could have been expected." She was speaking to her sister when she said this.

So Theo, after a fortnight at home, in which time he saw something of Tom Dennis, who was now under the gamekeeper at the Pheasant Farm, began a new life with the Reverend Samuel Goldie at Willacombe Vicarage in Hampshire. It is unnecessary to refer to the pained and weighty words which fell from his father before the boy left home. They seemed to affect Theo deeply, or in other words, his own, he "felt inclined to blub." But these admonitions, if they had any effect at all, had only a temporary effect. Theo had not been at Willacombe three months before complaints were made as to his conduct. Mr. Goldie wrote that there was something bad in the boy. He had been on the point of a

crime which would have had to be tried at the Assizes, when a country lad came by, rescued the girl, and, the reverend gentleman was glad to say, had given Theo a "hiding." He hoped it would do him good, but no. It had been discovered that he had been again picking and stealing, and, indeed, a warrant had been issued for his arrest on a charge of theft from one of his friends, a pupil of Mr. Goldie's and the son of a member of the Cabinet, who had no fault, except that he took too much stimulant, and had been placed with Mr. Goldie to break him off that habit. But Theo had run away, and therefore it was necessary for Mr. Goldie to communicate with his Lordship, which he did with feelings of deep regret and profound sympathy.

This letter took all the pomposity out of Lord Buckland for a time at least. He sat like a broken-down man in the great library at Buckland Castle, and his shoulders heaved as if he was sobbing. Lady Aileen, of course, was at her wit's end, and thought it well to send for some one, and, as luck would have it, she sent

for Dr. Forbes, who came at once, and as he was a professional man, Lady Aileen told him the whole story. He then went and had a long chat with Lord Buckland, and after that he placed himself in communication with the police. There was no necessity for concealment, for the whole matter was in the newspapers next day, and before the next night Theo Egg Buckland was caught in a wood not six miles from Willacombe, and was that night lodged in Bellchester gaol. Now it was an exceedingly lucky thing that Lady Aileen had sent for Dr. Forbes. He was a Scotchman, who, before he had settled at Hampton Haven, had spent several years as an assistant medical officer in the lunatic asylum at Winchbroke, and whenever the whole matter had been put before him he saw what was the right course to take, and, with Lord Buckland's permission, he at once went up to London, and in company with the famous Dr. Drury Druce (the alienist) he visited Bellchester gaol the next day. They were both convinced that this was a most curious case of moral insanity. Indeed,

whenever Dr. Forbes had heard the story of the expulsion from Eton and the subsequent history he had come to the quick conclusion that that was the only ground to run the defence upon, and as he travelled down with Dr. Drury Druce he was able to convince that distinguished expert that there was no other explanation of Theo Buckland's conduct. That gentleman, too, was quite easy to convince. He was a specialist, and his whole object in life was to bring the whole of disease within the sphere of his own special department. He had begun his life by writing a book on Diseases of the Brain, but in later and maturer years he called himself a neurologist, and so brought the whole province of the nervous system within his range, as well as diseases of the greater ganglia. He really believed with Carlyle, "that every stupid man, every wicked man, is only a less palpable madman." To a man with such a creed it is easy to believe that motiveless crimes, as he called them, like these of Theo Egg Buckland, are really only symptoms of insanity, and must be treated by therapeutics

and not by punishment. The visit to the prisoner did not carry their convictions any farther. The Hon. Theo looked like an ordinary young man. He had a low forehead, rather wiry hair, and a furtive eye. He denied his crimes to the physicians, and that in a way which satisfied them that he was defective in moral sense, but which would only have persuaded an ordinary man that he was a liar.

Still, these experienced gentlemen were quite right, and when the trial came on at Bellchester their wisdom was justified. No publicity which could be avoided was given to the matter. Of course, remember the case was not hushed up. That is not possible to our English law. But the judge discreetly did all he could to induce the press not to give undue publicity to a very painful case. Theo was induced to plead guilty. The medical gentlemen were called, and made it quite clear that the young man was not a criminal, but a lunatic. The judge strongly took their view, and the result was that Theo Egg Buckland, as he was called in the Assize Calendar, was ordered to be detained during Her Majesty's

pleasure. I don't think that it was generally known, certainly none of the newspapers mentioned it, that Her Majesty's pleasure to detain him only lasted for a few days, and that then Theo was sent abroad with a tutor, who was warned that he must be a policeman as well. But he was highly paid.

Now such an intense respect have I for the laws of my country that I think, like the King, they can do no wrong. I have no spite against the young man who was thus leniently dealt with, but I have a feeling that in the parallel case of Tom Dennis, who was about the same time indicted for arson and convicted, there might have been room for more mercy than was in fact shown him. Tom Dennis, it will be remembered, was the grandson of the gardener at Buckland Castle. He had lived with his mother at the gardener's cottage until he had been made assistant to the keeper at the Pheasant Farm. In that position he had done fairly well, and made his mother's heart proud when he informed her that he had got a rise of salary, and that Mr. Gundry (that was the head keeper)

had expressed his satisfaction with him. But young men will be young men, and Tom had at the fair at Hampton Haven seen a girl with red cheeks and eyes which, he said, "looked right through him." If the girl's eyes were such gimlets, they no doubt saw a bounding heart in Tom's breast, and she must very soon have known that Tom was in love with her. But the course of true love doesn't run smooth, and though Tom loved the lass, who was a dairymaid at Barnside Farm, the farmer there had seen her bright eyes and red lips, and been "smitten" with them too. Tom soon found out that he had a rival, but it wasn't fair rivalry according to Tom's way of thinking. First of all, it was the girl's own master that was courting her, and that wasn't fair; but worse still for the girl, the farmer at Barnside had a wife of his own, so his courting of the lass could mean her no good. All this made Tom angry; but what is the good of anger unless you have two medical psychologists to help you at your trial? and then it may be of use as a valuable symptom.

Tom used to prowl about Barnside Farm on

the chance of seeing her and having a word with her, and once by accident he came on the farmer himself, and had words with him, and from words they came to blows. But even Tom's prowess did not win the girl's heart, and some months after that she had to leave her place, and it appeared that the farmer had had his way, that he had ruined the lass and then turned her out of the farm. It was on this provocation that Tom set fire to the ricks at the Barnside, and for this crime he was tried about the same time that Theo Egg Buckland was ordered to be detained during Her Majesty's pleasure. The facts were dead against him. He had been seen prowling round Barnside before, but some one had seen him the very night that the fire occurred. The farmer proved their encounter, and said that at that time Tom Dennis had threatened to "be even with him yet." There could be no doubt that Tom had set fire to the rickyard, and the judge took a very serious view of the crime. There had, he said, been various similar offences, and the law must not be set at defiance. He

was sorry that a young man who had borne a good character should be accused of such a crime; but that, in his opinion, made the crime all the worse. He did not point out that if Tom had been a blackguard *ab initio*, if he had had a long list of offences charged against him, if he had had a father who was a peer of the realm and had had the assistance of certain alienist physicians, he might have got off with a nominal punishment, and the "grand tour" with a tutor. All that would have been beside the question, which was, according to him, "How was the law to be vindicated?" And he answered that question by sending Tom to penal servitude for five years.

And yet I have met some people who still believe that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor. This is obviously an error.

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